Soviet Literature • The Mess in Washington

An Oxymoron *Eugene McCarthy on Pigeons*

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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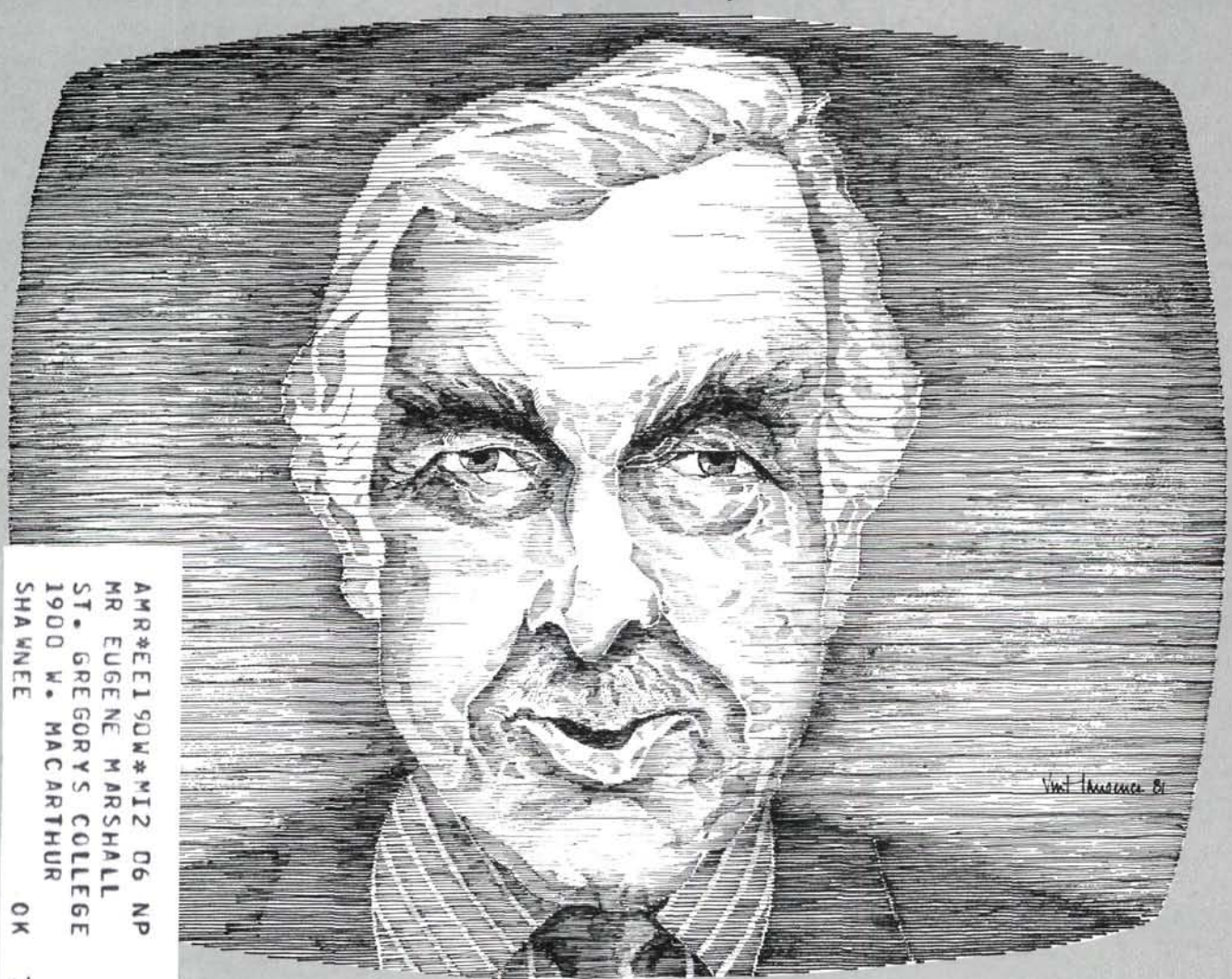

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TRB

from Washington
February 14, 1981

Reagan Watching

We are all Reagan watchers these days. And why shouldn't we be? He is head of a political revolution. On the domestic side, he is telling us that the way to balance the budget is to cut taxes, and that many of the services we are accustomed to receive from the state are really the intrusion of bureaucrats into our private lives. On the international side, he is provoked by almost every question to assail the Russians with a bristling, breathtaking indictment. This is more than an election overturn: it is a conservative counterrevolution. It could transform our politics for the rest of the century.

Reagan is direct, simple, and sincere. Candor shines out all over him. He does not pretend to be a deep thinker. He is affable and disarming. Again and again he says what he thinks, sometimes to his own detriment. He is safer when he is delivering somebody else's lines or sticking to tried and true quotations that he has used before. He is a performer by profession and it has been the single most important fact about him. In his famous TV speech for Barry Goldwater in 1964, he won fame and assailed communism: "We are at war with the most dangerous enemy that has ever faced mankind in his long climb from the swamp to the stars, and it has been said that if we lose that war, and in so doing lose that way of freedom of ours, history will record with the greatest astonishment that those who had the most to lose did the least to prevent it happening." It was theatrically impressive. It started him in politics.

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Just last month, in his January 29 press conference, Reagan said that Soviet leaders sought "world revolution," and in the furtherance of this, "they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime; to lie; to cheat, in order to obtain that [revolution]." He was supposed to concentrate on economics, but this denunciation stole the show.

Last week Reagan received five reporters at the first of what is supposed to be a continuing series of intimate, informal gatherings, in addition to the formal press conferences at which radio and TV are present. The president received them with engaging simplicity in the Oval Office. He explained that he wouldn't have brought up the subject of Russia at the formal conference a week earlier if "they," the press, hadn't raised the matter. For the five, he assailed the Russians again: "They don't subscribe to our sense of morality because they don't believe in any of the good things; they don't believe in an afterlife. They don't believe in a God or a religion, and that the only morality they recognize, therefore, is what will advance the cause of socialism. . . ."

Needless to say, this kind of thing lends itself to demagoguery and McCarthyism. It tainted American politics through Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon. There seemed to be an end of it with the ratification of the SALT I treaty and the negotiation of SALT II by Nixon, Ford, and Carter, but the latest treaty still faces the veto power of 34 members of the Senate. The two superpowers, able to incinerate each other, have about a year more before the terms of the SALT II protocol run out. Reagan thinks the pending treaty is "fatally flawed."

Meanwhile the cold war seems closer again, with an escalating verbal barrage. Last week the official Soviet Tass agency charged that the CIA is the "center of international terrorism," and that it deploys spies in the press, trade unions, and diplomatic posts. Reagan made his new attack on godless communism and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger told a press conference that he is thinking of deploying the neutron warhead in Europe, a move that President Carter first considered and then dropped. The neutron warhead produces less blast than other nuclear devices, and thus tends to spare property, but on the other hand it creates more intense radiation and is more devastating to humans. An eight-inch howitzer has been devised, Weinberger explained, that accommodates a neutron warhead: a businesslike device, apparently, through which a city might be taken with all its inhabitants dead but with its buildings intact.

We must get deeper into the Reagan administration before we can guess its place in history; there is a kind of simplistic naiveté in some of its manifestations, and in some of Reagan's past positions, that causes wonder. As he changed from actor to politician, he developed a capacity to compromise that made his governorship of California a success after a bad start in the first two years. Now in Washington, he is on a discovery cruise. He is flexible. His well-known formula against the Panama Canal treaties, for example, was: "We built it, we paid for it, it's ours, and we're going to keep it"; but now that it is a *fait accompli*, he is prepared to live with it.

There is an echo of Reagan's simplicity in many of his approaches to Washington as, for example, his attitude to "bureaucrats," whom he seems to imagine as individual opponents. He told the five visiting reporters in the Oval Office last week that "In the last few days we've seen the bureaucracy start to fight back—and it's not unexpected."

How? asked the wondering reporters. The bureaucrats were leaking false statements and innuendos, he explained. He cited rumors of havoc allegedly done by the employment freeze and by the order not to implement new federal regulations. He also cited the allegation that foreign aid would be cut drastically, which he denied. The latter "was another little case of bureaucracy at work—the whole panic about the foreign aid measure." Always he gives the word "bureaucrat" an invisible capitalization. Once they were public servants, now they are the invisible enemy.

Ronald Reagan's hardest task is to sell his supply-side economics to Congress and the nation. He is a first-rate communicator; maybe he can do it. But he is asking the country to risk its economic health on a theory that hasn't been proved. Arthur Laffer of the University of Southern California says there is a critical place on his "curve" where a little less burden on output (i.e., "supply") means more revenue for the state. Nobody knows precisely where this point is. Reagan's own advisers are divided. Washington watches with awe.

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Photo by Iain and Oria Douglas-Hamilton

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A poaching explosion is killing Africa's elephants. The World Wildlife Fund needs your help to stop it.

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Correspondence

Why McGovern lost

To the editors:

The version I heard of the McGovern story retold by Henry Fairlie in "Who Speaks for Values?" (*TNR*, January 31, 1981) differs slightly from that which Fairlie heard. In the version I heard (told by Representative Les Aspin) the two women buying their groceries with food stamps told McGovern they would not vote for him "because he gave away the Panama Canal," not because he was "wrong on the issues." The irony in this version of the story is much more poignant: that two women who probably don't even know where the Panama Canal is, much less how we got it or how and why we "gave it away," should have the leisure and the luxury that programs like food stamps provide for them to be able to afford to vote for or against someone on the basis of issues so far removed from their own lives. This is the type of society McGovern wanted, and now that—to a very great extent—we've got it, people like McGovern are considered obsolete.

J. E. Fields
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

Where's Notre Dame?

To the editors:

Which is it? (a) There's an office pool on how many Notre Dame alumni and students are readers of *TNR*, or (b) an ingenious marketing expert hit on a device to measure the number of *TNR* readers who "cheer, cheer for old Notre Dame"?

What other hypothesis could explain John Osborne's statement (White House Watch: "A Closing Chapter," *TNR*, December 27, 1980) that "Georgia and Louisiana teams are involved" in the Sugar Bowl football game which Carter was to attend?

John B. Gruenenfelder
Gary, Indiana

Mais, non!

To the editors:

S. T. Cohen's article "La Bombe" (*TNR*, January 17, 1981), suggesting that on September 22, 1979, the French exploded a neutron bomb near the Kerguelen Islands, is an entertaining bit of political fiction but does not correspond either to common sense or to the investigation which followed the "brilliant flash of light."

Since 1974 France has conducted *all* its nuclear testing underground, on the atoll of Mururoa, east of Tahiti. If, as Cohen states, this was done to "placate" Australia and New Zealand, why would France choose as a site for atmospheric testing the islands of Kerguelen, which in fact lie closer to Australia than does Mururoa?

May I remind your readers that a United Nations group of experts and the American ad hoc committee presided by Frank Press which investigated the event concluded that a malfunction of the nuclear test detection satellite was responsible for the false alarm.

André Baeyens
Le Ministre Plenipotentiaire
Directeur du Service
de Presse et d'Information
Ambassade de France
New York, New York

Culture vs. technology

To the editors:

Arnaud De Borchgrave and Michael Ledeen raise some worthwhile questions about the problems of technology transfer to the USSR, but unfortunately they repeat the old canard about the imbalance in the US-USSR scholar exchange programs ("Selling Russia the Rope," *TNR*, December 13, 1980).

Taking all US-USSR exchanges into account, the traffic in *both* directions is overwhelmingly in science and technology. The graduate student-young faculty program that de Borchgrave and Ledeen criticize for including large numbers of US humanists and social scientists is, in fact, one of the only channels we have for placing our Russian and Soviet specialists for long-term residence in the USSR, and is an essential component of this country's training and research capacity.

The role of this exchange in improving our ability to interpret Soviet behavior was highlighted when, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Washington urgently sought advice from experts who had first-hand knowledge of the Soviet Central Asian lands bordering on the turbulent Middle East. It was discovered, predictably, that the handful of Americans who have had any direct experience there and who know the native languages are almost without exception alumni of the exchanges who had conducted research there. Seemingly obscure and arcane subject matters, for years the exclusive domain of a small circle of devoted scholars in the humanities and social sciences, suddenly assumed dramatic significance.

We send social scientists and humanists on this program because the knowledge they produce is essential to the nation, and because our science and technology people have ample other channels of access, including the program of our National Academy of Sciences. As for Soviet scientists coming here on this program, they are very carefully screened by Washington for sensitive military or industrial topics, and far from all nominees are admitted.

To suspect the exchanges on the ground that we send "only" humanists and social scientists in exchange for "real" scientists is not only a distortion of the statistical facts of the overall US-Soviet science flow, but betrays a conception as false as it is outmoded that hardware is automatically more important than the cultural, social, political, and economic components in the East-West rivalry. Iran, anyone?

Allen H. Kassof, Executive Director
International Research & Exchanges Board
New York, New York

A doctor in the White House

To the editors:

Joseph Nocera's "The First Physician" (*TNR*, January 17, 1981) is an unkind dig at a man (Dr. Lukash of the White House) with a semi-thankless job. Nocera jabs at the poor doctor with the accusation that the president's resident physician has nothing to do except sit around all day reading *People* magazine.

Well! As everybody knows, doctors don't make house calls any more. It would be horrifying to think that should this president or any president experience a sudden heart attack or anything similarly serious, the poor wretch would perforce be shoved into the presidential limousine and carted out to Walter Reed (in all that traffic?) and then wait and wait and—oh, never mind.

Do our municipal and local firemen sit around reading *People* magazine? You bet they do—and *Playboy* and *True Confessions* and whatever they can get their hands on. And do they go to work when the fire alarm sounds off? And how they go to work.

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If Dr. Lukash or his successor switches to *TNR* or the crossword puzzle in the London *Times*, so much the better. But let's hope, at least, that the president's doctor is in the White House.

Faith I. Runner
West Tisbury, Massachusetts

Holocaust agnostic

To the editors:
The admirable remarks in M.P.'s Washington Diarist (*TNR*, January 3, 1981) about Noam Chomsky's defense of Robert Faurisson's inalienable right to propagate, from a university chair, the neo-Nazi lie that the Holocaust is a Zionist invention omitted one crucial detail. This is the same Chomsky who in many speeches over a decade ago denied to proponents of our involvement in Vietnam the right to free speech anywhere, and in a book called *American Power and the New Mandarins* (1968) wrote that "by accepting the presumption of legitimacy of debate on certain issues, one has already lost one's humanity." Apparently, since he takes an "agnostic" view on the question of whether the Jews of Europe really were murdered, Chomsky does not fear that his "humanity" is endangered by neo-nazism. Has he lately become a convert to Millite liberalism, or does his zeal for free speech swell in proportion to the anti-Zionism of the speaker?

Edward Alexander
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

To the editors:
In *TNR*, January 3, Martin Peretz complains that "You don't write about Noam Chomsky unless you are eager to get into a long correspondence or willing to be a bad correspondent." Peretz claims that "on the question . . . as to whether or not six million Jews were murdered, Noam Chomsky apparently is an agnostic." My views on the Holocaust are easily accessible: e.g., in my book *Peace in the Middle East?* (1974), where I wrote that "The Zionist case relies on the aspirations of a people who suffered two millennia of exile and savage persecution culminating in the most fantastic outburst of collective insanity in human history, . . ."; repeatedly, elsewhere. But facts are not Peretz's business.

What Peretz is distorting for his current purposes is my support for the right of Robert Faurisson to express his sharply contrary views, irrespective of the character or quality of his views. Peretz apparently prefers the Zhdanov doctrine, that ideas that are "objectively harmful" should be suppressed. Or perhaps, once again, he is simply revealing his commitment to elementary honesty.

Noam Chomsky
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Martin Peretz replies:
In his letter above, Professor Alexander disposes of Noam Chomsky's pretensions at being a civil libertarian. Let me deal with the question of Chomsky's honesty. Ever since Arthur Schlesinger caught Chomsky in a lie about Harry Truman (after which Chomsky launched a long and recriminating correspondence in the *New York Review of Books*), it's been common knowledge that on political and historical matters the MIT linguist is simply not to be trusted. I don't have Chomsky's book, *Peace in the Middle East?*, in front of me, but I'm willing to believe that he is quoting himself accurately. It remains the truth, however, that Chomsky wrote a 1,000-word defense of Robert Faurisson, and that defense is now being published as an introduction to Faurisson's denial that the Holocaust ever happened. (For a brilliant analysis of the ghoulish revisionism of Faurisson et al., Chomsky and readers may want to read Pierre Vidal Naquet's essay in *Esprit* ("Un Eichmann de Papier," 1980, no. 9). It is also the truth, and this Chomsky doesn't quote, that he told Herbert Mitgang (the *New York Times*, December 5, 1980) that "I have nothing to say about the contents of the [Faurisson] book." If that isn't being agnostic about the Holocaust, what would be?

Pope and politics

To the editors:
A recent article in *The New Republic* exemplifies what may be a peculiarly American habit: to conceive of all institutions as democratic political organizations. Even the title of Kati Marton's "The Imperial Pope" (*TNR*, January 17, 1981) shows that she thinks of the Catholic church in a political context. The pope is criticized for impracticality, indifference to opinion polls, and refusal to compromise. While these might be failings in a politician, they are what one might expect of a religious leader—or a scientist, for that matter. I am not surprised such arguments fail to persuade the church; more success could attend arguments against the Pill ban which are based on Scripture or church tradition, not expediency. One cannot persuade the pope to approve of drunkenness, despite its popularity, or infanticide, despite its effectiveness against overpopulation. Perhaps a church should not have dogma, but dogma becomes ridiculous when it is determined by the needs of the moment.

Eric Rasmusen
Somerville, Massachusetts

To the editors:
Adultery in the hearts of married men should not concern the "amiable and athletic prelate" now in the Vatican, tsk-tsks Kati Marton. Pope John Paul II's ideas, shrugs Marton, stem from his origins being rooted deep in Eastern Europe.

East Europe, *TNR* readers cannot fail to remember, saw the birthing of Dostoevsky. His prodigious output included the notable novel about a conspicuously macho family whose father boasted of having raped his wife. Could there be a surrealist East European kinship between the Holy Father and the *Brothers Karamazov*?

Gerald M. Kilcullen
Brooklyn, New York

Closet conservative

To the editors:
I think we all owe Governor Bruce Babbitt of Arizona a debt of gratitude for swelling the ranks of the Republican party beyond the wildest dreams of the Reverend Jerry Falwell. In "States Rights for Liberals" (*TNR*, January 24, 1981) he keenly notes that President Reagan's divestiture of federal programs does not include "areas that benefit Republican constituencies, such as highway construction, law enforcement, the arts, or even education."

I must plead guilty. I have, unwittingly, made use of a few highways. My affinity for law enforcement, admittedly regrettable, is nonetheless undeniable. I now realize my true motive in attending various theaters and museums has been to give aid and comfort to that stalwart defender of the avant-garde, the Republican National Committee. And any of my Moral Majority compatriots will point with pride to the schools of this nation as GOP boot camps.

(continued on page 40)

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

February 14, 1981

Mixed Signals

If other countries wonder whether the United States knows what it is doing, it's not hard to understand why. From administration to administration, and sometimes even within the same administration, we bounce from one policy to another—and often from one emotional state to another—with little attention to our long-term interests. A Richard Nixon will promote uncompromising enmity to communist regimes in China and the Soviet Union for 20 years, then abruptly reverse course, not merely initiating detente, but selling it as the beginning of "a generation of peace." And, a decade or so later, we will abandon detente and with it, possibly, arms control.

We support the new administration's tough attitude toward the Soviet Union. We, too, think the Soviets will "commit any crime" or "lie and cheat" to advance their interests and we are glad President Reagan wasn't afraid to say so when asked. And we don't even mind that the administration withdrew Soviet ambassador Dobrynin's special parking and elevator privileges at the State Department, especially after Dobrynin's government did its best to wreck Iran's hostage-release plan. At the same time, we think the administration needs to be clear about our long-term interests. We live on this planet with the Soviet Union, which shares with us the power to destroy it. That means we have to talk to the Soviets eventually, and we need to revive strategic arms negotiations and attain, if we can, a fair SALT agreement. The Reagan administration says that it wants one. We can only hope that it knows a good agreement when it sees one.

A similar inconsistency governs American attitudes toward human rights. Yet again the United States has bounced from the Wilsonian idealistic tradition—which asserts America's responsibility to convert the world to democracy—to the hard-line realist tradition, which holds that we have to be friends with our friends, even if they torture their own people.

There have been mixed signals from the administration on human rights. It was a good sign that Reagan aides won a commutation of the death sentence of Korean dissident Kim Dae Jung, but it was a bad sign that Reagan apparently said nothing to Korean president Chun Doo Hwan about letting Kim and other political prisoners out of jail and about ending police state restrictions in South Korea. In fact, the Korean side reportedly wanted to include a statement on human rights in the final Chun-Reagan joint communiqué, containing assurances of Chun's intentions to move toward democracy. But the Reagan administration is said to have vetoed the idea so as not to arouse expectations and criticism. We support Reagan's reversal of Carter's plan to remove American troops from Korea and we can agree that Carter unrealistically hectored South Korea about morality—to the extent of Carter's trying to convert former president Park Chung Hee to Christianity. But the Reagan administration's behavior sends a signal to the world's right-wing dictators that they can get all they want from the US by condemning a prominent dissident to death and then reducing his sentence at the last moment to life in prison.

The signals are even worse if Reagan goes through with his apparent plan to make an incendiary right-winger, Ernest W. Lefever, the assistant secretary of state in charge of human rights. If Patt Derian, Carter's human rights chief, was too punitive toward friendly regimes, then Lefever's writings show him to be far too tolerant. Lefever sympathizes with South Africa, which, he says, should be our "full-fledged partner" in the struggle against communist expansion. Lefever would have supported Anastasio Somoza even though his corruption had aroused the animosity of all classes and political groups in Nicaragua. Lefever also sympathizes with the far-right regimes of Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala. His attitude on human rights is that "beyond serving as a good example and maintaining our security commitments, there is little the US government can or should do to advance human rights, other than using quiet diplomatic channels at appropriate times and places."

It was Secretary of State Alexander Haig who said that American foreign policy should be characterized by consistency, balance, and reliability, and we couldn't

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agree more. The Reagan administration ought to be changing emphasis from Carter policies. But for the US to abandon human rights entirely is a terrible error. Our reputation as a champion of human rights is an important weapon in the American arsenal. To throw it away would be a kind of unilateral disarmament.

Stockmania

Well, well, well. There was Dave Stockman, the Robespierre of the Budget Office, up on Capitol Hill last week begging Congress to increase the ceiling on the national debt. Congress approaches this periodic duty like a dentist appointment, putting off having to think about it as long as possible, but ultimately relenting. Without legislation to raise the ceiling, presently at $935 billion, the government will run out of money by February 18.

What makes the spectacle especially amusing this time is that it's the first chance for Republicans to learn about the responsibilities of power, and the Democrats are rightly making the lesson as painful as possible. The last time Congress went through this exercise, in June 1980, not a single House Republican voted to increase the debt limit. Stockman, during his two terms in Congress, consistently voted not to raise the ceiling. They did this in order to flex their "fiscal responsibility," safe in the knowledge that the Democratic majority would do the truly responsible thing and prevent the government from grinding to a halt.

But when Republicans made an issue of these debt-ceiling votes in the last election, using them to bash Democrats over the head as "big spenders," they went beyond acceptable levels of political mendacity. These ritual ceiling exercises have nothing whatever to do with fiscal responsibility or irresponsibility. Many of these same Republicans who refused to support raising the debt were happy enough to support farm subsidies and needless military bases and other constituent-pleasing matters that made the debt raise inevitable.

So Democrats were happy to turn the tables last week and express mock horror that the Reagan administration wished to put our great nation in hock another $50 billion. "This is due to the totally demagogic way the Republicans campaigned against us last year," said Senator Alan Cranston. And last week's show is but a preview of the pageant of wailing and gnashing of teeth we can enjoy when, within a year, Reagan and Stockman must come back and ask that the debt ceiling be raised past the one trillion mark.

Stockman insisted last week that a Republican debt ceiling increase is very different from a Democratic debt ceiling increase. He said, "I voted against those [previous] debt-ceiling bills because I had no confidence anybody was developing a plan to control spending. I have confidence that such a plan is now being developed, because I am writing it."

No doubt enough Republicans will come to share Stockman's confidence so that the debt ceiling will be raised and the government will continue to function. But this will not be the real test of their political maturity. That will come when they have to start voting against real spending, and not just dispensable spending like money for the poor and the sick. Take something like synthetic fuels—a recent program (not entrenched), mostly worthless, and very costly. All it took was a rumor that Stockman was eyeing synfuels for major cuts, for Senator James McClure, Republican chairman of the Senate Energy Committee, to demand urgent reconsideration.

Our Democratic minority will have to watch these spendthrift Republicans very, very carefully.

White House Watch

Fun in the Junkyard

President Reagan's first fortnight in office was a plus for him and for the country. The populace got further assurance that he is not the ogre that Jimmy Carter tried to make him, nor the ignoramus that he's been called in this column. He handled himself with self-confidence and grace—though never under much pressure during the first days—in his inaugural address, at his first presidential press conference, and in greeting the freed American hostages from Iran. He refused to join in sour and feckless carping at his predecessor's management of the hostage problem; and he honorably leaned, barring some unforeseen result of a review of the negotiations and agreement that preceded the release, toward fulfilling the commitments that Carter had made the nation's commitments. He pleased American hardliners and raised Soviet hackles with some clichés about Soviet intent to win the world, and later had the wit to say he wished he hadn't been asked the question that elicited the answer. At a later interview with five reporters, he refused to answer two less explosive questions about his congressional relations, demonstrating that he doesn't have to be taught that he doesn't have to answer every question he gets from reporters. His published schedule seemed to leave no room for the workday naps that he used to take and that he appeared to need. In this initial period, he didn't perpetrate a single bobble of the sort that well into his 1980 election campaign made observing him a joy and a terror.

Yet there was a strain of sheer ugliness in the Reagan operation, a strain that some of his people seemed to enjoy displaying and that he did not discernibly

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discourage. On the day after Reagan's inauguration, his press secretary, James Brady, announced the instant dismissal of 15 department and agency inspectors general in order to replace them with "people that are meaner than a junkyard dog when it comes to ferreting out fraud, waste, and mismanagement." A little later Brady's senior deputy, Karna Small, said again that the inspectors general are being replaced with "people meaner than a junkyard dog." Like former US senator and attorney general William Saxbe, the first person this reporter heard using the term, they didn't explain why junkyard dogs are extra mean. But it was no surprise that the quality is what this administration wants and not just in inspectors. James Watt, Reagan's secretary of interior, has not denied a report that he called in and fired all but one of the department's senior officials with crass and unnecessary brutality. In his public appearance and behavior, and apart from his animosity to preserving wilderness beauty for beauty's sake, Watt has a mean and hungry look. He is herewith dubbed the cabinet's junkyard meanie.

Perhaps more than any other individual in public view, Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina personifies the ugly conservative extremism that the electorate elevated along with Ronald Reagan. Helms has used his senator's prerogative to delay the nomination of Reagan appointees whom he deems to be ideologically impure, if for no other reason than that they've been associated with Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Henry Kissinger. One of his targets, Lawrence Eagleburger for assistant secretary of state for European affairs, and a swatch of other State appointees wanted by Secretary Alexander Haig, still had not been nominated at this writing because of Helms's interference. All that is pretty well known, but a related part of the story is not well known.

Part of the story has to do with what E. Pendleton James, Reagan's chief talent hunter and assistant for presidential personnel, and recruiters working with him during the transition, called "The Sweet Sixteen." The sixteen, never an exact number, are Reagan's California and western buddies, rich men all, the core of his "Kitchen Cabinet." William French Smith, Reagan's personal attorney and now his attorney general, has been replaced as the informal group's chairman by two co-chairmen. They are Joseph Coors, the Colorado beer baron, and William Wilson, a retired Los Angeles businessman-investor (whatever that is). Not abrasively, but in a big way, they moved into the post-election personnel selection process, concentrating at first on choices for cabinet and topmost subcabinet positions. Since early January a small group of them, varying week to week, has visited and stayed in Washington at their own expense, reviewing names prepared by James and his crew for policy jobs before they are submitted to Reagan. Since January 20, Wilson and his daughter Marcia Hobbs, a substantial Los Angeles figure in her own right who is president of the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association, have moved into the anteroom of the huge suite, once Richard Nixon's hideaway, that is assigned to Reagan's assistant for political affairs, Lyn Nofziger, in the Executive Office Building next door to the White House. Wilson is the group's resident manager, and his daughter is scheduler and arranger. They and their friends see the key names, and volunteer others, and express approval or disapproval before the lists go to Reagan.

ENTER HELMS. A White House supposition is that a slew of disgruntled regional Reagan campaign directors, passed over for cabinet appointments, appealed to Helms and to Senator Paul Laxalt of Nevada, arguing not so much for themselves as that their Ron was being sold a lot of impure types who'd never been for him until he was winning. Laxalt fended off the complainants. Helms embraced them, and with them the Sweet Sixteen, who generally supported his and the gripers' view that only simon-pure, wellhead Reaganites were entitled to Reagan jobs and could be trusted in them. Helms told Roberta Hornig of the *Washington Star* in late January that "everything's changed now," and that Wilson and his friends "have the power of veto" over policy appointments. It's acknowledged at the White House that Wilson and his pals have been much involved since the election, and still are, but not that they have a "power of veto" over proposed appointments. The pattern of appointments announced or proposed since they strengthened their role in January, including as the lists do many acceptable people, suggests that a lot of ego satisfaction is entailed. All but one or two, for instance, of a list of 14 names submitted to Reagan by Haig on January 29, for State appointments, were on the original Pendleton James list for those jobs. In early February, most of the deputy and under secretaryships having been filled, the Wilson-Coors reviewers were busying themselves with lower appointments, assistant secretaries and such. The sixteeners probably will be nudged toward suggesting nominees for the many political ambassadorships now opening up, thus assuaging their yen to serve their Ronnie without getting tangled up in the hundreds of sub-subcabinet jobs that James and his staff must soon fill.

(continued on page 12)

Staff Change

With this issue, Michael Kinsley resigns as editor of *The New Republic*. He joined *TNR* in 1976 as managing editor, and will remain as a staff writer with the title of senior editor. A new editor will be announced shortly. Meanwhile, all unsolicited manuscripts, article proposals, press releases, letters of complaint, crank phone calls, subscription cancellations, proposals for a redefinition of liberalism, Zionist and anti-Zionist tracts, should be directed to "editorial offices."

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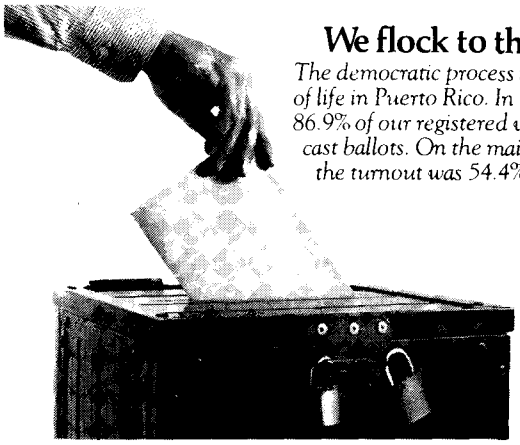
PUERTO RICO



We flock to the polls.

The democratic process is a way of life in Puerto Rico. In 1976, 86.9% of our registered voters cast ballots. On the mainland, the turnout was 54.4%.

We cherish our culture.

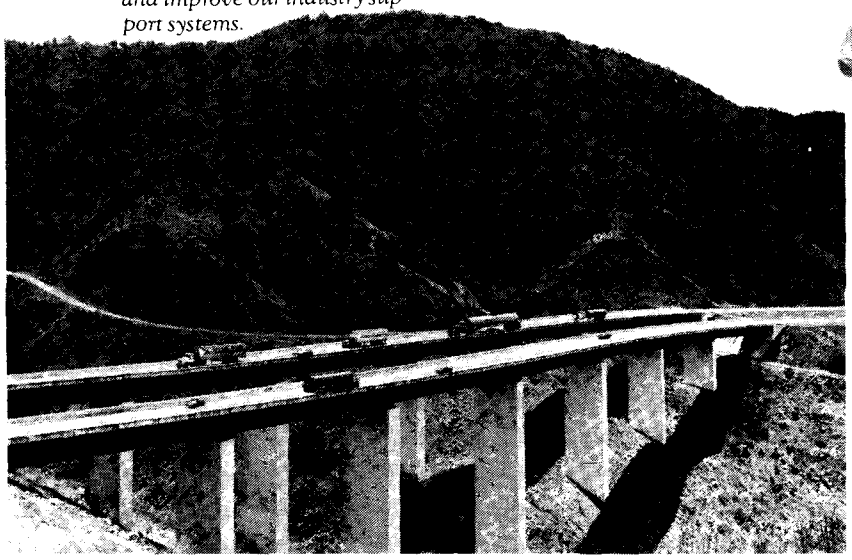
The Areyto is an internationally known folkloric troupe that helps to perpetuate our unique songs and dances. They've been applauded on four continents.

We're family-oriented.

We want each new generation to be better than we are. At this Marquez family gathering, there's a chemistry professor, a university administrator, a lawyer, and six youngsters who'll follow in their footsteps.

We have fine highways.

18-wheelers can reach any seaport within 2 hours. This year we'll spend $274.8 million to expand and improve our industry support systems.



We're Americans in our own special ways. We're proud of our heritage, just like other Americans are proud of theirs. Iowans are different from New Yorkers. Puerto Rico's 3.3 million American citizens are different from Ohio's 10.7 million. That's what America's all about.

Differences. And similarities.

The music that plays in our shopping malls has a Latin beat. But you'll find J.C. Penney and Sears and McDonald's there. And a thriving business in each.

We also share more basic things with our fellow Americans. Like wanting to get ahead. And a willingness to work for it. Puerto Rico is alive with skills and talents.

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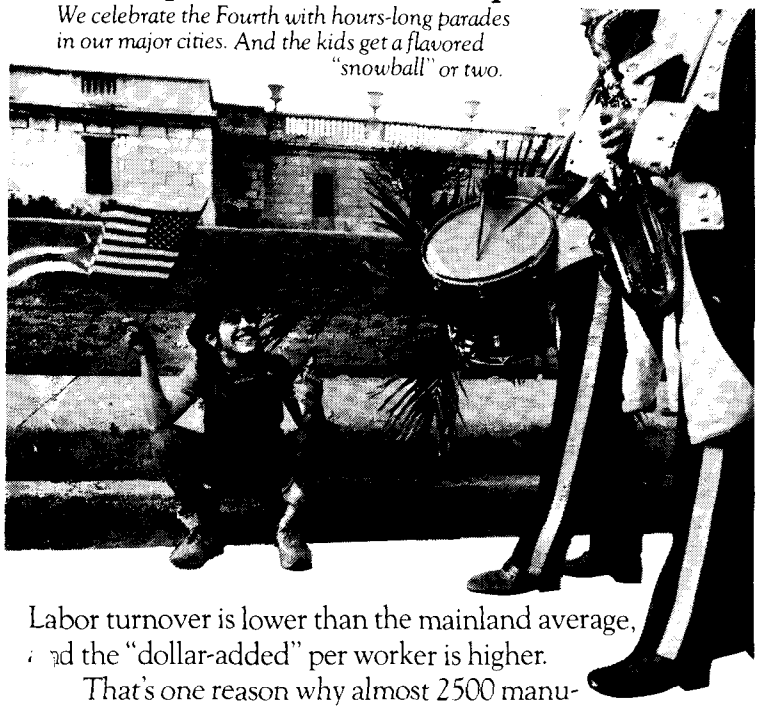
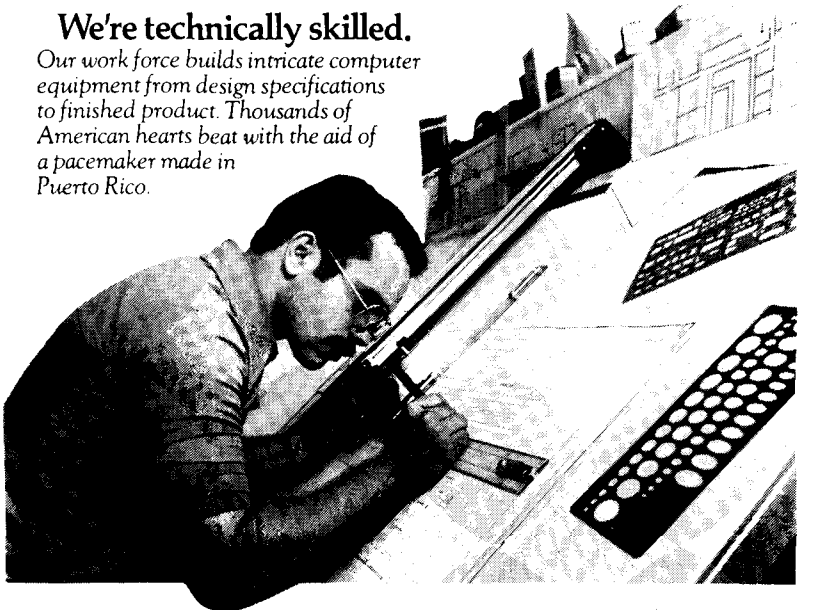
IS AMERICA.

We're community-minded. *Thousands of parents volunteer time for Cub Scouts and other youth activities. Our civic organizations are familiar: Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary, Shrine.*

We're proud of our citizenship.
We celebrate the Fourth with hours-long parades in our major cities. And the kids get a flavored "snowball" or two.



We're technically skilled.
Our work force builds intricate computer equipment from design specifications to finished product. Thousands of American hearts beat with the aid of a pacemaker made in Puerto Rico.



Labor turnover is lower than the mainland average, and the "dollar-added" per worker is higher.

That's one reason why almost 2500 manufacturing companies have established operations here since 1950. Another is our geographic and linguistic ties to over 200 million Central and South American consumers.

All considered, is it any wonder that 535 companies have built new, additional or expanded facilities here in the last 3 years alone? They've found that Puerto Rico and industry is a partnership that works.

Puerto Rico, U.S.A.

The ideal second home for American Business.

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It can only be surmised, as this reporter does surmise, that the ugliest single Reagan performance to date is somehow connected with Jesse Helms. The actual performer was Secretary Haig, whose savage treatment of career diplomat Robert White, the ambassador to troubled El Salvador, is otherwise incomprehensible to anyone who regards Haig as highly as this writer has when he was up and when he was down. Helms was outraged by White's temerity in denouncing the atrocious behavior and leaked statements of some members of the Reagan transition team dealing with Central America—among them a Helms assistant, John Carbaugh—while Carter was still President and Ambassador White was serving Carter policy. It also appeared to outrage Haig, who at NATO was not above an occasional covert swipe at the President he was then serving. Haig summarily fired White, denied him or delayed the reassignment usually accorded to career officers in ambassadorships, and generally behaved in a way that was bound to shock the career Foreign Service. One is compelled to suppose that it was Haig's tradeoff for Helms tolerating some first-rate Haig choices for State positions.

White House staffing proceeded rather raggedly, but in a style suggesting that Reagan understands perfectly well, his frequent disclaimers to the contrary notwithstanding, that if he controls the federal government from anywhere it will have to be from the White House and with a strong White House staff. His titular chief of staff, James Baker III, is building a corps of assistants and deputies more elaborate than Carter's staff chiefs ever had. Richard V. Allen, the assistant for national security affairs, is keeping his head down, as instructed by Reagan and demanded by Secretary Haig, but not altogether down. Part of Allen's demure cover is his move, proposed by him before the inaugural, back to the West Wing basement office occupied in years past by Walt Rostow, McGeorge Bundy, and Henry Kissinger until he maneuvered himself upstairs into the first-floor corner office now assigned to Reagan's master policy overseer, Edwin Meese III. Allen is assembling a professional and support staff of around 95, about the size of Kissinger's and Zbigniew Brzezinski's. It's way over the publicized budget allowance of 62 full-time positions, but that's been true for years, partly because it includes many communications officers, computer experts, and the like who are not on the NSC staff proper. Allen is doing some pressroom background briefing, plus occasional on-record appearances, but is ducking television for now and telling his staff to let him do most of what little talking to the press is done. His staff of some 35 professional policy officers will continue to order up studies from State, CIA, Defense, and other agencies, and to review the responses before they go to Reagan, though Allen is said to encourage friendly discussion before such demands are made. He's the President's principal national security briefer each workday morning, with Meese and Baker and a few others free to attend if they wish.

The most interesting White House staff change, apart from the looming presence of Meese, is the abolition of the Domestic Policy Staff created by Carter and its replacement, under assistant Martin Anderson, by a new White House Office of Policy Development. Its director, reporting to Anderson, is Reagan's longtime press secretary and speech-statement drafter, Ed Gray. He now has aboard five senior policy advisers, a plain policy adviser, and two policy analysts. Among the seniors are John McClaughry, an innovative Vermont Republican who should have been but wasn't hired in the early Nixon White House, and Ann Fairbanks, wife of Richard Fairbanks, who is to be Haig's assistant secretary for congressional relations at State. Anderson and Gray aim at a total staff of 36, about 20 fewer than the old Carter staff under Stuart Eizenstat. As with the NSC staff, and despite all the Reagan talk of cabinet government, the new policy staff will have much the same responsibilities for domestic initiatives and review that such staffs have had since Daniel P. Moynihan invented the first one for Nixon. Jimmy Carter's Reorganization Plan Number One, in 1977, authorized the Domestic Policy Staff. Anderson and Gray are likely to discover soon that congressional approval of a new reorganization plan will be necessary.

John Osborne

If cloned mice give you chills,
what about an artificial womb?

Tales From the Hatchery

On January 4, 1981, the *New York Times* proclaimed on its front page, "First Cloning of Mammals Produces Three Mice." The resulting shock waves sent many scurrying for genetic bomb shelters. It was a curious reaction. The experiment had been completed and widely reported more than 18 months earlier (for example, in *Science* magazine, July 28, 1979). And in two crucial respects what happened was not cloning at all: the mice were produced, not from adults, but from very early embryonic cells; and the three mice were not duplicates but, in fact, each genetically distinct.

But, like yelling "fire" in a crowded theater, crying "clone" on the front page is sure to cause a stir. One popular reason is that cloning threatens man's nature and future. A better reason is that clones, like UFOs, have enjoyed such a long and distinguished literary career, and have become so familiar to us, that we are now abnormally alert to any sign that such a communal nightmare might be coming true. As early as 1932, Aldous Huxley guided us through the fertilizing and decanting rooms of the East London Hatchery in *Brave*

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New World. Fifteen years later C. S. Lewis warned, in *The Abolition of Man*, of "the man-molders of the new age . . . who can cut all posterity into what shape they please." Huxley placed the Hatchery in the year 632 AF (After Ford) and Lewis thought this development would take 100 centuries. It is still less than 50 years after Huxley, and yet we are growing impatient. A few years ago, a science journalist named David Rorvick was able to peddle as nonfiction a fabricated story of the cloning of an elderly man. Our appetite has been most recently whetted by *The Boys From Brazil*, a fantasy novel and movie about people who take the idea of a Hitler Youth quite literally. With such a build-up, the report about three Swiss mice was enough to conjure up the specter of batches of Bruce Jenners and other fevered visions of doom.

THE FACTS, fortunately, provide no cause for romance or despair. A true clone requires two steps. First, one must take a cell from an adult and produce an embryo from it. That is done by removing the nucleus from the adult cell, injecting it into a fertilized egg whose own nucleus has been removed, and then somehow activating in the adult nucleus all those genes that the adult had turned off during its maturation, and that—in embryonic cells—permit replication and differentiation. This, the rejuvenation step, has never been achieved in higher organisms. Nor is there much prospect that it will be achieved soon because we have only the foggiest notion about which genes make embryonic cells multiply and specialize, let alone how to turn them on.

Step two of cloning is a simple embryonic twinning procedure. We disassemble the embryo produced by step one at a very early stage, when it consists of only a very few cells, and we produce a new embryo from each cell. This is done, again, by removing the nucleus, injecting it into a fertilized egg, and implanting the egg into a conscripted, hormonally primed mother. All the offspring are then twins (that's what clones are) of the original adult. Huxley suggested dispensing with mother and adding a third step, assembly-line, extra-uterine production—the Hatchery. But this step has only a literary connection to cloning.

To put the Swiss experiment in perspective, consider this. The rejuvenation procedure, step one of true cloning, was not even attempted, since no one has any idea how to do it. The experiment started with cells from mouse embryos, not cells from adult mice. The twinning procedure, step two, had already been accomplished in the early 1950s on frogs. It took 25 years to do the same with mice, because mouse eggs are smaller, more fragile, and normally fertilized inside, not outside, the mother. On the whole, the three mice represented a considerable technical achievement, but, for mad scientists, a rather boring one. The experiment, after all, produced only copies of unknown embryos, and we've been doing that in humans for years using fertility drugs that yield up to six identical humans at a time without any genetic razzle-dazzle. Besides, as the *Times* itself pointed out, the point is to clone Mozart. It's no fun cloning an embryo if you don't know if it is going to be Mozart.

The real fun of cloning is taking an adult cell and restoring its ability to reproduce and differentiate. Why this doesn't happen in mammals as it does in ferns—why the adult cell contains the same genetic information found in the omnipotential embryonic cell but cannot use it—is one of the central questions of modern biology. This is for reasons that have nothing to do with cloning. Understanding genetic regulation is the key to understanding aging and birth defects. If we could control genetic regulation, we could regenerate lost limbs and severed nerves, and prevent the wild embryo-like multiplication of cancer cells. We would be at a scientific frontier so vast that cloning could seem an eccentric and irrelevant application of our knowledge.

In fact, the Swiss mouse experiment was undertaken to better understand gene regulation. It was known from the frog studies that embryonic nuclei could produce full adults, but nuclei from later stages of development could not. The purpose of the mouse experiment was to study this genetic shutdown in mammals. The incidental products were three famous mice, a score of agitated professional ethicists, and one columnist, George Will, frightened enough to declaim: "The implications of such science are so momentous that science cannot be an absolutely autonomous enterprise, free from social regulation"—a self-evident conclusion (even Edward Teller would not deny it) derived from a demonstrably false premise.

WHAT IS he so afraid of? What precisely *is* the power of such science? Einstein from cuttings, as one wag put it? He would be an Einstein in name and face, a twin sharing Einstein's genes; but with a totally different history he would have a totally different consciousness. Likewise a cloned "Hitler," or 100 cloned Hitlers: bad for the gene pool, perhaps, and monotonous for the eyes, but hardly cataclysmic. I suspect that the Cassandras are more worried about Huxley's claim that "making 96 human beings grow where only one grew before . . . standard men and women in uniform batches [is] a major instrument of social stability." Their fear is that once the technology falls into the hands of the state, it will be an instrument for totalitarianism. Two reasons for skepticism here. First, totalitarians have succeeded admirably in getting hundreds of millions of people to carry little red books, chant slogans, and worship icons using such mundane tools as propaganda, terror, and persuasive re-education. Television, radio, controlled presses, schools, and secret police are far better means of exerting social control and ensuring stability than tinkering with genetic machinery of which we know little and of whose relation to behavior we know less. Second, rearing batches of identical children is as clumsy and

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inefficient a means of achieving social control as one could imagine. Even today, the state does not lack for surplus infants under its total control. The state has not succeeded in turning the inhabitants of orphanages into social robots, or even model citizens. And not because they are genetically distinct; there is absolutely no reason to believe that orphan twins are any easier to control than unrelated orphans. State policy, on the contrary, is to get children into families, because the family is the most efficient instrument for transmitting social values—better than orphanages, better than halfway houses, better than *Brave New World* nurseries.

I have no quarrel with the desire of those, like George Will, who wish to exercise their moral faculties and regulatory zeal on runaway science. I suggest only that they have been looking at the wrong end of the Hatchery. The real ethical dilemmas arise neither from the prospect of rejuvenating an adult cell (hopelessly farfetched), nor from twinning an embryo (an uninteresting imitation of nature), but from Huxley's step three—extra-uterine development of fetuses—to which the mouse experiment was irrelevant, and which in humans is already upon us.

Louisa Brown, who now walks and talks, was conceived in a test tube and nurtured in a petrie dish. She was not the first, however. A few years earlier, one childless New York couple had their egg and sperm fertilized in a test tube, until the chief of Columbia University's Obstetrics Department ordered a halt to the experiment (and the unfortunate embryo). There were earlier undocumented reports. In 1959 Dr. Daniele Petrecci of the University of Bologna reported that, after more than 40 failures, he had cultured a human embryo for 29 days ("a heartbeat was discernible"), and then destroyed it because, he said, "It had become deformed and enlarged—a monstrosity." Petrecci claimed to have kept another embryo, a female, alive for a full 39 days. For reasons that are obscure to me, the Soviets awarded him a medal in 1961 and announced that they had kept 250 fetuses alive beyond Petrecci's record. One lived, they said, for six months and weighed more than one pound before dying.

We should be skeptical about these reports. After all, Petrecci produced no documentation, and the Soviets claim to have invented the telephone and baseball as well. Nevertheless, when scientists vie for the world record in such monstrous experiments, can anyone doubt that there are indeed "mad scientists" running around? Petrecci's reason for growing fetuses in test tubes, he said, was to use them as organ farms for transplantation.

Cloning humans is a fantasy, useless and boring. The real slippery slope that we find ourselves on today is that of *in vitro* fertilization. Our language has already prepared us for the slide. Where we used to speak of procreation, we now speak of reproduction, an industrial metaphor that for some, like theologian Paul Ramsey of Princeton, heralds the "final triumph of manufacturing over human parenthood."

And we may soon have the necessary machinery for it. We now have incubators for the last 16 weeks of gestation, and test tubes for the first. Only the middle 23 weeks remain unconquered. It is not too soon to ask whether we have the right to expose a future child to the unknown risks of artificial gestation, and whether it is permissible to create and destroy human life so casually at the workbench. And, as always, there are questions for lawyers too. The Supreme Court abortion decision turned on the question of fetal "viability," defined as an ability to live, *with artificial support*, outside the womb. The Court ruled that until the fetus is "viable," the mother has a right to abort. Will the advent of full laboratory gestation—achieved with the destruction of numberless embryos along the way—ultimately give right-to-lifers the legal victory their theological arguments could not?

Questions like these soon will be of consequence to others besides the pro- and anti-abortionists. I suggest that we begin addressing them—leaving to the geneticists the mysteries of genetic regulation, and to the novelists the fantasies of cloning.

Charles Krauthammer

Looking out for number 226,504,826.

Census and Sensibilities

Senator George Aiken secured his place in history by proposing that we end the Vietnam War by simply declaring victory and going home. The US Census Bureau, mired in a similar quagmire late last year, adopted the Aiken strategy. And it worked. On New Year's Eve, when no one was listening, the embattled bureau called a news conference to declare that it had counted everyone in America, and was through until 1990. After spending one billion dollars and 10 years, the Census Bureau counted precisely 226,504,825 Americans. With such fanfare as befits an exact figure, the bureau turned over its data to the president. The bureau director, Vince Barabba, quit to go work for Eastman Kodak. The media lost interest. Suddenly the Census war was over.

Everyone promptly forgot the reasons behind the Census squabbles—the widespread suggestion that administrative foul-ups and inadequate methods would result in an undercount of inner-city blacks, Hispanics, and illegal aliens. Undercounting is a hot issue partly because the Census is used to divvy up seats in the House of Representatives (its original purpose), but mainly because it also is used to divvy up government money in various federal programs. After the 1970 head count, the bureau figured it came up about 5.3

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million short of the true population, and took steps to mend the figures. Did the Census Bureau actually mean to say on New Years Eve that there was no undercount this year? Did the bureau really believe that it counted every man, woman, and child in the United States?

Actually—no. "Of course there's an undercount; we've never denied it," explained George Hall, the bureau's deputy director. He does the bureau's explaining now that Vincent Barabba has gone. "In fact, if there's one thing I know for sure, it's that the American population is somewhere above that 226 million figure. The only thing is, I don't know by how much."

People have been grumbling about the dicennial Census ever since the first one in 1790. But only once before this summer was it regular front-page news. That was in the 1940s, when Census data were used to find Japanese-Americans and throw them in detention camps. Mayor Ed Koch of New York thinks his city's future depends on the Census results, and has applied his loud-mouthed style to the issue—happily suggesting that the Census Bureau is run by self-serving Neanderthals. On more than one occasion, Koch has referred to former Census director Barabba as "Barabbas," a semi-conscious allusion to the biblical criminal.

THE SERIOUS questions in the Census debate this year are: can the Census Bureau count everyone? And if not, can it figure out how many people it missed? To the first, the bureau freely admits that the answer is no. The standard agency answer is that "we can count everyone who wants to be counted." But the bureau's answer to the second question has filled books (dull ones), and has stirred as much passion as any Census-related issue ever could.

The concept of an "undercount" is, by nature, ridiculous—which is a big part of the bureau's credibility problem. An undercount is essentially a count of how many people have not been counted. Since this is impossible, the bureau counts the people, compares it to the number of people it originally guessed it would find (a scientific guess, to be sure), and calls the difference between the two figures "the undercount."

The bureau calculated that it missed about 5.3 million people in 1970, based on previous population estimates, so it "imputed" additional Americans to make up for them. To understand that imputation requires at least a graduate degree in statistics. Yet the whole thing made sense, somehow: it smoothed over the considerably ruffled feathers in urban areas, where the Census had clearly missed large numbers of minorities in ghetto areas. It also focused congressional attention on the problem, and the bureau followed up its 1970 effort with seminars, conferences, and studies over the undercount problem.

The bureau proceeded along to 1980 with the same basic Census game plan, using population estimates along the way to figure out exactly what the 1980 undercount would be. The question wasn't if, but how much. Or so they thought. The bureau's population estimates through the 1970s led the agency to put the expected 1980 population at 226 million. So naturally, when the bureau saw how its final figures were shaping up—right near the projection—it saw the opportunity to pull an Aiken. Its December 31 declaration put considerable weight on that earlier projection, as had previous statements and interviews by Barabba. The bureau wanted everyone to think that it had done—in the standard victory phrase of politics—better than expected.

BUT THAT is not what really happened. The 226.5 million preliminary count, now sitting on President Reagan's desk somewhere, actually suggests that the bureau overcounted the American population by about half a million people. The idea of an overcount is even more ridiculous than an undercount. In fact, it is impossible. "It's purely an academic term," explains a bureau spokesman. "Obviously we didn't overcount."

According to Vince Barabba a few weeks before he quit: "These figures indicate a tiny or nonexistent measured undercount. In fact, there is some undercount, but it cannot be measured accurately because we have no method, at present, to measure the number of illegal residents. As a result, our best estimate of the 'true' population does not include illegal residents. The apparent zero undercount results from the under-enumeration of legal residents being offset by enumeration of illegal residents."

Translation: There is an undercount. But we blew our early estimates of the population because we couldn't figure out the number of illegal aliens. But it all came out in the wash: we may have missed all those blacks and Hispanics, but we found enough illegals to make up for them.

That admission seems enough to set the bureau back 50 years. It's as though it figured the best way to avoid embarrassment would be to underestimate the population, then surprise everyone with an on-the-nose count. And that's exactly what happened, only the bureau found more people than it estimated. If there was an undercount (and Barabba has declared that he will accept only a Supreme Court decision on the myriad of lawsuits on this subject), then who really lost out? Probably not the big, complaining cities, at least not as much as they say: government formulas actually reward many of them for declining populations. Princeton urban expert Richard Nathan suggests that Trenton, New Jersey, actually would lose money if the undercounted blacks were added to its population.

The people who should be complaining most haven't raised the slightest objection to the 1980 Census. They are the mayors of cities like Austin, Texas, and Tucson, Arizona, where illegal aliens flowed during the last decade without attracting the Census Bureau's notice. Since those population estimates that the

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bureau screwed up determine revenue-sharing funds, those cities lost considerable funds during the 1970s that the government properly owed them. The Census Bureau missed the huge Hispanic population growth, and those cities will pay the most.

On to 1990.

David Blum

David Blum, a former *TNR* summer intern, reports from Chicago for the *Wall Street Journal*.

Government is for the birds.

The Mess in Washington

The General Services Administration has announced that it is taking on once again the perennial problem of pigeons in Washington. Possibly GSA is moved by an earnest desire to help the newly elected president carry out his campaign promise (one that is made by challenging presidential candidates every presidential election year) to clean up the mess in Washington. Or possibly GSA is making a last-ditch attempt to demonstrate that it is a useful agency, in order to escape the Reagan ax, despite its recent record of not being able to perform very satisfactorily its statutory responsibilities of keeping track of typewriters, desks, paper clips, and other office supplies.

GSA's announced program is not one of limited objectives. It does not contemplate the use of half-way measures. It will seek to achieve the total depigeonization of Washington, through extermination of what is known as "the Federal Triangle flock." Mere reduction of the number of pigeons in the flock will not satisfy, nor will confinement of the birds to specific areas or buildings.

Traditional devices for frightening pigeons, such as stuffed owls and mechanical snakes, will not be used. Chemicals like Roost-No-More and Avitrol are not scheduled for use, since neither worked well in the past. Roost-No-More was introduced for the Nixon inauguration in 1973. A slimy substance, it was smeared on the trees along the parade route. The slime was supposed to cause the birds to skid off branches along the way, and consequently, in discouragement or frustration, to fly away. But Roost-No-More was not satisfactory. The birds ate the chemical and many ended up or down sick or dead. The Washington Humane Society was disturbed.

The threat posed by pigeons to presidential parades, it should be noted, is not as great as it was in earlier times, when the open convertible was used to transport elected presidents and other notable persons down Pennsylvania Avenue. The popular style today is the turret-top limousine, in which the president, or another VIP, exposes only the upper parts of his body, with arms upstretched, looking, depending on his mood, like someone either sinking slowly in quicksand, or arising from the grave in response to Gabriel's horn. In either case, the turret-top considerably reduces the target area for pigeons.

In the summer of 1979 another controlled attack on the pigeons was initiated. A company hired by the government drugged the pigeons using corn treated with Avitrol. Avitrol was meant to drive the pigeons off by giving them some kind of seizure. It turned out to be lethal, and public protest moved the government to abandon that effort.

Two years ago the Carter administration launched an even more subtle attempt on the lives of pigeons in Washington, with the effort to reestablish the perigrine falcon in the skies above the nation's capital. This project was conducted by the Department of Interior, which claimed that pigeon eradication was not its main purpose. Pigeon deaths would be only a "natural fallout"; the primary purpose was the restoration of the falcon. Nature and ecology would be held responsible for the pigeon deaths. The Humane Society, the conservationists, the friends of endangered and deprived species could have no cause to object. The Interior Department did succeed in hatching four young hawks atop one of the departmental buildings, and hopes ran high that the perigrines would, in accordance with the Scriptures, "increase and multiply." Alas, not so. The young hawks have flown. Of the four that hatched, one is reported to have been found dead in Baltimore after flying into a building, possibly standing where once a tall pine grew. Another died of sickness, or of gunshot, on Long Island. Two are not accounted for.

The GSA evidently has given up on sound as a means of discouraging pigeons, and will not expand a system now in place on the White House grounds. President Carter once invited to the White House a group of poets. These sensitive creatures, normally attuned to the sweet notes of the lark, the thrush, the cuckoo, and the mockingbird, were startled to discover the strident recorded sounds of the frightened starling coming from a wired magnolia tree as they waited in line to be received by President Carter.

The GSA spokesman does say that as a back-up measure, the agency may recondition and reactivate the long-abandoned electric wiring systems placed on many government buildings decades ago in a vain attempt to discourage starlings and pigeons from roosting and nesting on the cornices of government. The core of the current GSA plan, however, is a no-nonsense approach. Basically, it entails spreading box traps on roofs throughout the Federal Triangle, and then poisoning the captured birds with chemicals such as carbon monoxide and chloroform.

This project may give the GSA something to do until President Reagan moderates his current adamant

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stand against redecorated government offices, but it is doomed to failure. Pigeon experts know that pigeons cannot be exterminated. At most they can be moved about. The greatest American practitioner of the science of moving pigeons about was one Lewis Neid, of St. Paul, Minnesota. The Neid technique might not work in Washington, but it was perfect for St. Paul. At the height of Neid's career, St. Paul had only three tall buildings: the State Capitol on a hill to the north, the Arch-Diocesan Cathedral on a hill to the northwest, and the First National Bank building, on what was called the upper levee. Neid hired himself out as pigeon remover to church, state, and commerce, but never to all three simultaneously. In this way, the pigeons always had a safe haven in at least one of the three buildings, while each of the three great estates of St. Paul could feel that they were rid of pigeons most of the time. Possibly a Neid-like program, challenging every pigeon sense, might drive the birds to Crystal City or to Rosslyn, where all buildings are nonhistoric, and will long remain so.

The Neid experience and theory is sustained by more scholarly and scientific judgment. Eric Simms, the noted British ornithologist, concludes in his book *The Public Life of the Street Pigeon*, published in 1979 and based on a study of the 6,000-year history of pigeons,

> Pigeons are dependent upon man, and as long as man is around, the pigeon will be too.
>
> While man continues to live in decaying houses and retains his wasteful and idle habits, there will be an attraction in our towns and cities for the pigeon. The only way to control the pigeon is to live in a clean and tidier way.

The street pigeon, Simms says, is not "an endangered species." He might have added: not by nature, or by man, or by the General Services Administration.

Eugene McCarthy

Eugene McCarthy is the former senator from Minnesota.

The difference between emotions and interests in foreign policy. See, e.g., Iran and Poland.

After the Binge

by Ronald Steel

Now that the hostage drama binge is over and the networks are back to their usual fare of sitcoms, maybe we can all return to a more normal set of concerns. It is reported that for the past year Jimmy Carter spent half of his working time on the hostage issue. This is easy enough to believe, considering the state of the economy. But it's far from clear that Carter's obsessive vigil sped up the release of those incarcerated Americans.

The hostage crisis certainly distracted public attention from matters that, if not more immediately pressing, were of more far-reaching consequence. And it contributed greatly to the distortion of American priorities that crippled the Carter administration. Crippled it both in fact, that is in its ability to deal with the collapse of the old authority in Iran, and in perception, that is in the view of American power held at home and abroad.

From the beginning the hostage issue was, for Americans at least, one of image. After all, this was not the first indignity inflicted upon American diplomats. Not long ago, one might recall, the American ambassadors in Cyprus, Afghanistan, and the Sudan were murdered, and the embassy in Pakistan invaded by a bloodthirsty mob. But the incidents soon enough disappeared from the headlines, and therefore were forgotten. What differed about Iran was that it was a continuing affront. One can more readily identify with hostages than with dead men. And the entire affair symbolized the decline of American power as an effective political instrument.

This had been coming for a long time and everyone knew it. The tribulations of the dollar, a shifting strategic balance, a growing Soviet assertiveness, the end of affluence, restive allies, and, of course, the defeat in Vietnam all contributed to that decline. What transformed the hostage issue into a national trauma was the contempt the captors displayed, and the frustration of knowing that any course of military action would likely be either self-destructive or doomed to defeat. The problem was compounded because Iran was going through a cataclysm in which the hostages were instruments of an internal drama of bitterly opposed factions. In Tehran the United States was dealing not so much with a hostile government as with a feuding family squabbling over an inheritance.

The calls now heard for retribution, whether by sending the US Air Force for a visit or by welching on a

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contract already signed, are quite understandable. They reflect a human desire to strike back after being wronged. But they are also based on a misreading of American interests in Iran—interests that could be disastrously compromised by seeking a retributory pound of flesh. A rational foreign policy must be based on interests, not emotion. In Iran, as in Poland, the interests are clear, as are the emotions. The problem is that they do not coincide. Diplomacy for a great power is not a game of tit-for-tat, nor one of cheap shots from the sidelines. It is a calculation of long-term gains, even if it sometimes means taking short-term lumps.

What are America's interests? In Iran they are to have a cohesive society with a central government that is capable of keeping the nation intact, guarding its frontiers from invaders, and resuming its important trading role with the West, both as a supplier of oil and as a major customer for American goods. It has been said often enough, but apparently bears repeating, that Iran is a country that is fending off an invasion while being torn apart by a political-religious upheaval.

That struggle will not go on forever. The terms on which it is resolved will have important consequences for the United States. And the manner in which the American government deals with the fragile regime in Tehran could have a considerable effect on the outcome. What do we seek in Iran? This is the beginning of any serious discussion. Do we really want the faction that negotiated a deal with Washington—despite enormous internal opposition—to be undermined and swept away by its more fanatical opponents? Do we want Iran to descend into civil war, to disintegrate into ethnic states dependent on Soviet arms for survival and prey to Soviet influence?

ONE of the main reasons American foreign policy is in disarray is that it is too much prey to emotionalism, too concerned with posturing and image, and too easily distracted from the essentials of the nation's wider interests. Retribution upon Iran, or reneging on the deal, is not a policy: it is a spasm. We would feel the damaging effects of such a spasm long after the momentary satisfaction had passed. Nations cannot protect their interests by binges of self-indulgence. It is to America's advantage to create a decent working relationship with whatever government finally emerges in Iran. Thus Washington, at the very least, must refrain from actions that would encourage those most hostile to a *modus vivendi* with us.

National interest does not always go hand in hand with national sentiment. There are many situations that we do not like but are unable to resolve, or even to affect except at a very great cost. Iran today is one of those. So is Poland. We all welcome the efforts of the Polish people to gain greater control over their destiny, to set up independent trade unions, to liberate themselves from a repressive and ossified bureaucracy, and to use the power of the state to serve rather than oppress them.

While the United States cannot tell the Poles how far they ought to go in these efforts, for the risks are theirs, as are the possible gains, many in the West have good reason to urge them to go slowly. The international banks, which are uneasily contemplating the $20 billion they have loaned to an economically incompetent Polish regime, would not like to see their debtors carted off to jail and their loans repudiated. The Catholic church, though it is a rival power center within Poland, is also an international organization that must think above all of its own survival and its ability to function in whatever kind of state emerges in Poland. And the nations of Western Europe can hardly face with equanimity the prospect of one million Soviet troops sweeping into Poland.

IS the counsel of caution self-serving? Of course it is. Is it unwise? Not necessarily. The Soviet leadership clearly does seek to avoid armed intervention in Poland. Not because the Soviets are tender-hearted, but because the costs would be enormous. An invasion would involve a prolonged battle with Polish workers and perhaps even with the Polish army. It would deal a terrible blow to Moscow's relations with the Communist parties of Western Europe and would destroy the continuing detente with the governments of those nations. It would re-cement the military alliance between the United States and its NATO allies, and probably would stimulate an even greater American military build-up than the one currently contemplated. And Moscow would also have to assume the enormous costs of keeping the moribund Polish economy afloat—a cost now obligingly assumed by capitalist bankers in the West.

But the Soviets would intervene, as analyst Seweryn Bialer observes in *Foreign Affairs*, if any one of three things happen. First, if the workers take to the streets and the Polish government, unable to use the army, loses control of the situation; second, if the workers gain control of the factories and veto governmental policies; third, if the Communist party itself should be transformed and embrace the demands of society, as occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

A Soviet intervention would, to be sure, be a supreme tragedy for the Polish people. But they would not be the only ones affected. An invasion would have profound repercussions on relations between Russia and the West, would intensify the cold war, and would encourage the most militaristic elements within the Kremlin. This, obviously, is not in our interest. Clearly, then, the United States has an important stake in the course of action taken by the Polish workers. And it has a far greater stake in their failure than in their success, for only if they fail would the Russians intervene.

Thus, while as individuals we wish the Poles well and might even encourage them to be bold, the government of the United States does not enjoy that luxury. It must be prepared to deal with the conse-

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quences of the workers' failure and with all the events that might follow in its wake. We should expect our government to be more responsible than we are as individuals, for it must act, while we need only wish or declaim. If the Poles fail in their gambit, then we too shall suffer, though assuredly not as much as they would.

Would we come to the aid of the Poles if the Russians invaded? Of course not. The matter is not even open to question. Poland is an integral part of the Soviet bloc and the Soviet security system. This was tacitly acknowledged in the postwar settlement of 1945 and never seriously challenged since. This is not pretty, but it is a fact of life. If we resist telling the Poles to give it a try, it is because we know what will be the likely consequences for them—and for us. And we have to resist giving them any false hopes of armed support that we have not the slightest intention of honoring.

Those most agitated by the supposed decline of American power imagine that if the United States warned the Soviets strongly enough, they would not dare intervene. This is wishful thinking, because there is no way we could prevent such an invasion or reverse it, and the Soviets know this. The Soviet decision will not be based on what is said by Washington, because the collapse of US-Soviet detente means that they need not modify their behavior to avoid imperiling good relations with the United States. Since there are no good relations, there is no argument for restraint, as we saw in Afghanistan. The Soviet decision will be based primarily on what happens within Poland, and to a much lesser degree on a reluctance to endanger relatively good relations with Eastern Europe. Today the Europeans have more leverage over the Soviets than we do. If the Russians invade, the NATO allies almost certainly would drop their demand that deployment of US nuclear missiles in Europe be tied to progress on a SALT II accord. They also could be prodded into a much bigger rearmament program. In this sense, what was bad for the Poles would be good for NATO.

The last time the Russians used their troops to keep their shaky empire together, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, we were too busy with our own war in Vietnam to pay much attention. This time it is different. Liberal guilt over Vietnam has been replaced by a new mood of national assertiveness, one intensified by the humiliation suffered in Iran. There is a palpable desire to make American power felt, and an assumption that events can be made to respond to that power. Well, in some cases they can. But Iran was not one of those places, as we learned to our immense frustration, and neither is Poland. Central America, however, is our Poland, and that is likely to be the first real test of the new administration's approach to social change in an area where it does have the effective power to make a difference.

So far Reagan and his advisers have moved slowly. Before prodding them into actions that could well backfire, we would all do well to weigh the consequences of our words carefully. American power is great, but it is limited. This is no time for easy grandstanding.

America's benevolent uncle severs his family ties.

And That's the Way It Seems

by Mark Crispin Miller and Karen Runyon

Starting on Thursday, March 12, Walter Cronkite will be absent from the CBS Evening News. After 31 years with CBS and almost 19 years as anchorman, he will be replaced by Dan Rather. So far, the reaction has been remarkably restrained. CBS tries, through euphemism, to make the termination sound like a fresh start. Representatives of the network insist that Cronkite, 64, is not retiring, but "stepping down from the Evening News"; their word for retirement is "transition."

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Cronkite himself has also been somewhat evasive about the end, as if reluctant to come right out with the awful news. For the past few years, he has publicized a lot of reassuring plans: he will take on some of the world's biggest problems in hard-hitting documentaries. He will finally "speak out," if not on television, then "in front of groups where you can plant seeds, thoughts." And he just might come back to see us through the occasional crisis. In other words, he won't be gone, he'll just be "away"; no longer part of daily life, but likely to pop up helpfully at crucial moments, like Obi-Wan Kenobi.

In fact, the retirement will hit millions of Cronkite's

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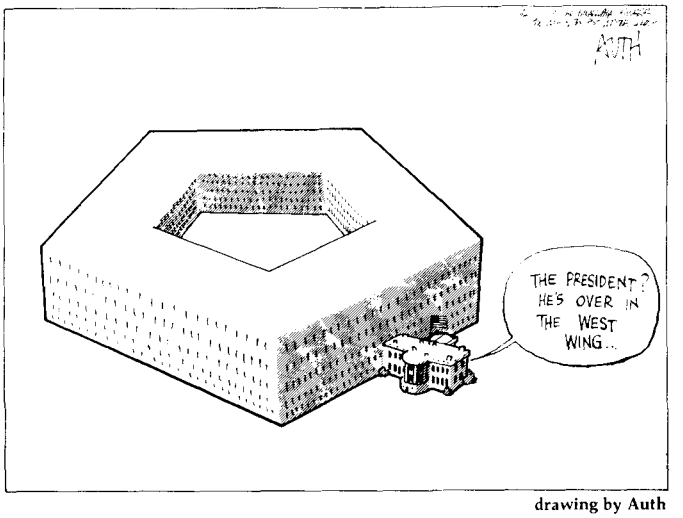
viewers very hard. Cronkite has been a national figure for as long as many people can remember: longer than FDR, longer than Ike, and certainly longer than our many recent presidents. The very fact of his long career is enough to make his disappearance startling. "When we have done any thing for the last time," wrote another reporter (Samuel Johnson) in 1760, "we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted us is past, and that as more is past there is less remaining."

There is another dimension to Cronkite's strong appeal: he seems heroically honest. When "the most trusted man in America" leaves his anchor desk next month, it will seem, to many, as if this nation were losing its one incorruptible guardian. Walter Cronkite has won the kind of trustful admiration that our leaders ought to have deserved. They lived and vanished, he endures; they threaten the fabric of the system, he restores it. And, also like an ideal leader, Cronkite has, for years, managed to keep alien realities at a safe distance, putting the world in order every weeknight. In short, his charisma partly results from a long record of apparent objectivity.

Cronkite's unusual "longevity" seems to define the history of television journalism, and, therefore, the history of postwar America. The man who is now "the stalwart kingpin of CBS News" (as William Paley puts it) joined CBS in 1950, at the request of Edward R. Murrow. The following year, when the coasts were linked by coaxial cable, network television became a national medium, and television news, until then a mere novelty, soon overwhelmed radio news and began to compete with *Time* and the newspapers. Its progress (and Cronkite's) began at the Republican National Convention in 1952, where CBS was the first to demonstrate the possibilities of live coverage. Sig Mickelson, then head of the television news division, worked out the concept of an "anchorman," one authoritative figure at the center of a complicated broadcast. Cronkite was the first to play the role and take the title, and he did it brilliantly at both conventions. "By the time the Democrats had nominated the team of Adlai Stevenson and John Sparkman," writes Mickelson, "Walter Cronkite, unknown prior to the conventions, had achieved a status comparable to that of a Hollywood leading man."



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As news programming at CBS became more varied and elaborate, Cronkite's face became a more familiar sight. He anchored the 1956 conventions (and every convention since, with one exception), and appeared regularly on many different shows: as guide to the past on "You Are There" (from 1953) and "The Twentieth Century" (from 1957); as the narrator of "Air Power" (from 1956); as co-host on "The Morning Show" (1954), where his duties included kibitzing with two puppets named Humphrey the Houn' Dog and Charlemane the Lion; as anchorman of the "Sunday News Special" and the weekly "Eyewitness." His service on these last two shows prepared him for his final promotion, in 1962, when "Douglas Edwards with the News" became the "CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite." The next year, the program went from 15 minutes to its present half-hour, adopting the familiar newsroom format, with Cronkite at his semicircular desk, seemingly poised amid the hubub of communications. Although NBC's "The Huntley-Brinkley Report" also went to the half-hour a few days later, that show rejected the journalistic ambience in favor of coverage "from the studio," emphasizing witty scripts and the interplay of its two hosts: "Writing is 75 percent of the trick," said Huntley. "We're trying to emphasize reporting," countered Cronkite, whose program used more interviews and field reports. Huntley and Brinkley beat Cronkite in the ratings until 1967, but Cronkite always seemed the more authentic newsman. He seemed, in fact, to represent the purest impulses of his profession, and continues to evince the same integrity.

Cronkite's longevity has identified him not only with television journalism, but also with those events that television has imposed upon the national memory. His reactions at some of those extraordinary moments have been especially moving because they have been so unexpected, coming from the even-tempered figure, and because, generally speaking, they have expressed *our* reactions. This first happened a few months after the introduction of the expanded format in 1963, which was also the year that more people began to watch the news than read it. Many millions were therefore tuned in to CBS on the afternoon of November 22, trying to find out what was happening. At 2:33 p.m., Cronkite, still in his shirtsleeves, appeared on the screen, put on his glasses, absently put his thumb to his lip, then took paper in hand and announced: "From Dallas, Texas, the flash—apparently official—President Kennedy dies—at 1 p.m., Central Standard Time—2 o'clock Eastern Standard Time—some 38 minutes ago." After this precise report, he gulped, his lips were trembling, and he kept putting on and taking off his glasses, as if trying not to look into the camera.

The image of Walter Cronkite blinking back tears is one of several Cronkite images that mark the highlights of the recent past. At the Democratic National

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Convention in 1968, we (and Cronkite) watched Dan Rather on the convention floor, struggling with "security guards" ("If you're not going to *arrest* me, take your hands *off* me!"), who finally knocked him down. Cronkite lost his temper: "I think we've got a bunch of *thugs* here, Dan—if I may be permitted to say so." Cronkite also has exploded in more jovial ways. Covering a space shot in the early 1960s, he roared at the moment of lift-off, over the revving of engines and the nattering of technicians, "GO, BABY, GO!"

Because Cronkite has been so deliberate about "hewing to the middle of the road," his few calculated departures from the pose of detachment have seemed as dramatic as his outbursts; these moments too reverberate historically. When Cronkite decided that the war in Vietnam could not be won, he made that point explicitly in a half-hour special, and criticism of the war suddenly seemed legitimate and influential. Cronkite's treatment of the Nixon scandals was equally striking. In 1972, reporting a complicated story about the Soviet wheat deal, he took the unprecedented step of standing up to explain a point with graphics. Later that year, he devoted 14 minutes of the Evening News to a report on "the Watergate caper." Although the second half of that report, scheduled for the following night, was mysteriously shortened (probably because of pressures from the White House), the presentations still directed national attention to the story, thus easing the burden on the *Washington Post* by giving Watergate its due exposure.

CRONKITE IS indeed a solid institution, like a reputable bank, and this aura must owe something to his many years of dispassionate service. But it is absurd to explain his appeal by pointing to its long duration; if he hadn't appealed in the first place, he wouldn't have continued to appeal. In fact, Cronkite projected his famous qualities long before he became a silvered celebrity. In 1965, one columnist wrote in the *New York Daily News* that Cronkite seemed "as solid as a mountain, as reliable as sunrise."

This image is what has won him so much influence and respect; or, more precisely, it is his image that is so influential and respected. Cronkite always bristles at the implication that he is merely a reader of lines, and he is right to resent this belittlement. As anchorman and managing editor of the Evening News, he has worked very hard, and his coverage of special events demands long preparation and enormous skill (and a steely bladder, as his nickname, "Old Ironpants," suggests). The fact remains, however, that Cronkite's most popular qualities are superficial. When he is praised, he is usually praised for how he seems, not for what he does. "He has given the news an aura of solidity," says George Reedy, LBJ's press secretary. Of course an aura is, by definition, immaterial. This kind of praise is common, and suggests that Cronkite's strength lies not in his journalistic abilities but in his video persona. To ascribe Cronkite's success to the appeal of his image is not to deny his achievement, but to point out that his success derives from something which is, basically, beyond his control.

Of course, Cronkite is careful to preserve the purity of this image. He would never do commercials, and has always been reluctant to editorialize: "Others are doing as good a job or better," he says, "but they do commentary and are classified as to ideological bias and that hurts them." Moreover, he has kept the Evening News free from gimmickry, show biz extras, and flashy graphics. The show's straightforward character, in turn, has enhanced Cronkite's own authoritative air. Cronkite takes pains with his image because he wants to be believed, not because he is a Machiavellian, setting up a deceptive facade. Cronkite and his image are continuous; he has not created it, but only maintains it. If you were to yank him out of bed at 3 a.m., he would still seem like Cronkite, even before he'd brushed his teeth. However, although this sincerity may help explain why people accept his image, it doesn't tell us what they love about it. There is much more to Cronkite's image than "honesty," "objectivity," or any other handy abstraction.

WHY IS THAT image so appealing? If we compare it with the images of other anchormen, we might discover something of what Cronkite isn't. Compared to Cronkite, for example, Dan Rather seems a bit tense. We remember him, not seated in Olympian detachment like his predecessor, but leaping into the fray, even when there isn't any. Whether sparring with Nixon, or confronting mendacious gas station attendants on "60 Minutes," or crawling around in colorful Afghani garb on the Evening News, Rather seems hyperactive. At the anchor desk, he sits ramrod-straight, eyes smoldering, reading his lucid copy in a measured tone which suggests that he can barely keep from jumping up and screaming. He is not, like Cronkite, comforting. We imagine, as he reads, that his knuckles are turning white.

John Chancellor of NBC is a little more like Cronkite: authoritative, quietly commanding, reading his copy with parental calm. Chancellor's air of command, however, is somewhat chillier. His tortoise-shell glasses and tone of ironic reserve make him seem like a stern headmaster (or chancellor), compared to Cronkite, who, with his jowls and sad eyes and graying moustache, seems capable of nothing harsher than a mild *harrumph!* NBC's technique also makes Chancellor look forbidding. Both men sit behind gigantic desks, the kind of thing that Mussolini would have used, if he had run a news program instead of a small nation. Chancellor, however, appears more dominant, shot from a slightly lower angle. Before commercials, Cronkite is shot from above, shown sitting amid the machinery of a busy newsroom: he looks, at those moments, like a vigilant captain. When Chancellor breaks off, the camera zooms back eerily to show him sitting exalted in twilit space, like Ming the Merciless.

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At ABC, on the other hand, the anchormen always seem quite close to the screen, as if the cameras were resting on the toes of their expensive shoes. They appear in close-up because such shots are more striking than longer shots, and ABC News has tended, since Roone Arledge took it over, to employ the snazziest effects and devices. The anchormen themselves are pretty snazzy devices: Frank Reynolds, of the wry grin and permanent tan, dashing Peter Jennings, and the decorous Max Robinson. They are all smooth-toned, well-groomed, and good-looking, and therefore don't seem entirely trustworthy. It looks as if Arledge, in need of a staff, went out and raided an escort service. Cronkite, on the other hand, seems made of durable homespun, and wouldn't fuss over his looks.

So far, Cronkite's image seems a simple one: a figure of calm, benevolence, and unpretentiousness. But it is not simple at all. The image of Walter Cronkite is a national symbol; when it no longer appears at the anchor desk, it will be as if George Washington's face had suddenly vanished from the dollar bill. Such symbols contain opposites. In them, a culture's conflicts appear to be reconciled, its antitheses resolved.

If there is any word that comes to mind with Cronkite's image, it is "avuncular." Cronkite is "avuncular" as an underbelly is "soft," straits are "dire," and adventure is "high." It is a chestnut that contains some truth. That Cronkite seems "avuncular" suggests that he inspires a kind of warmth among his viewers, as if he were a member of their families. And yet there is a certain aloofness about "Uncle Walter Bear" (to use Nicholas von Hoffman's epithet), an air of inaccessibility. This is partly a consequence of Cronkite's refusal to speak his mind: "Each time I listen to you," Oriana Fallaci once said to him, "I wonder: What are his opinions? He doesn't express them, and he must have them." But his remoteness seems complete, involving not just his "opinions" but his very self. If he is avuncular, he is like an uncle whose visits are punctual and pleasant, but not emotionally draining.

IN OTHER words, Cronkite's quality of restrained benevolence is perfect for television, which always offers and withholds, seemingly intimate yet in fact quite cold. Cronkite's remarkable ease with the medium entails, paradoxically, a certain distance from the viewer. By contrast, Edward R. Murrow was ostensibly a much more formal man, always faintly ill at ease before the camera, unable to ad-lib well or smile easily; and yet, writes Alexander Kendrick, "through his entire career, people who heard him thought they knew him." Cronkite, on the other hand, seems less familiar. Television gave us "Ed Murrow," but not "Walt Cronkite."

This remoteness makes us trust in Cronkite all the more. We think of an uncle as especially benign because his affection is uncomplicated, as opposed to the ambivalence of the father. If Cronkite were "fatherly," it might imply an overbearing or competitive temperament, a love of ambiguous intensity. As an "avuncular" figure, he seems both reliable and innocent, a good protector.

This apparent innocence makes him seem strong, a hero from the heartland like Honest Abe or Mr. Smith among the crooks of Washington. With his wholesome midwestern accent (from growing up in Kansas City) and occasional boyish enthusiasm, he seems completely unsophisticated. It's surprising to recall that he makes a lot of money and lives in Manhattan. But in his apparent artlessness he never comes across as naive, because he seems as worldly as unsophisticated. He is surely the most elegant of newsmen, and this sartorial perfection enriches his image with the luster of success. Cronkite therefore offers us an image of virtue rewarded, the old-fashioned man of integrity doing well without selling out. We trust in Cronkite all the more for thus showing that the system works.

CRONKITE'S vindication of "the system" is not only implicit. He is a dogged optimist, despite his instincts. In many interviews, he mentions what he calls "the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"—overpopulation, pollution, nuclear proliferation, depletion of natural resources—and expresses reasonable doubts that these "immediately dangerous" problems can be solved soon enough. Invariably, however, he ends on a note of cheery nationalism ("We still have it as a nation") which leaves the reader feeling heartened. Thus Cronkite and television news often report serious problems only to express faith that we can lick them. Unlike the pessimistic Murrow, who, with his long face and uneasy gaze, often ended with a challenge to the audience, Cronkite is usually too easy-going to upset his viewers, who persist in thinking that, somehow, Walter will take care of it. The most significant contradiction in Cronkite's image is that it seems to convey the truth, "the way it is," yet assures us that everything is fine. If he were ever to stop tempering his "objectivity" with inspirational nuance, he would no longer be "the most trusted man in America."

That celebrated "objectivity" is really an illusion of transcendence. We believe in him, not because he tells us, "without bias," all about the world, but because he seems above that world, and therefore in a good position to console us. Surrounded by maps and clattering teletypes, the CBS correspondents giving their reports at his bidding, he sits at his anchor desk like God on His throne, white-haired and watchful. It is a comforting image: "Walter's at his anchor desk, all's right with the world." And it is comforting for another reason. In his mighty isolation, Cronkite seems the apotheosis of our national detachment, our deep-rooted faith that ideology is something that can be avoided, like herpes. Cronkite seems to prove that it is possible just to be a nice guy, while the mobs beyond our borders threaten us with politics.

Cronkite also seems above the mobs within the

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newsroom. His function is ceremonial rather than investigative; he therefore seems of a cleaner breed than his underlings. We identify him, not with unseemly grubbing, but with events of grand sweep and slight significance: papal visits, presidential jaunts, space shots, the Bicentennial. He also handles conventions, elections, inaugurations, and other apparent bench marks, always in a celebratory key. Even Nixon's resignation showed, he said, that "the system works." Cronkite's interviewing style reflects this reluctance to confront or probe. When his role is interlocutory, inviting reminiscence or reflection, his interviews are often unforgettable, such as his talk with Eisenhower on the special, "D-Day Plus 20 Years" (1964). He is not much of an adversary, on the other hand. Mayor Daley, on a visit to the anchor booth a few nights after Rather was punched out, defended his goons and chastised CBS in an interminable monologue, while Cronkite, eyes darting, fidgeted with his pencil and ended up commending "the politeness and general friendliness of the Chicago Police Department." The scene remains disquieting: Mayor Daley lied and Walter Cronkite suddenly became a cowering reporter.

Cronkite seems to transcend not just the news organization but television itself. He has kept himself aloof from the ceaseless intriguing at CBS, and has never committed a single indiscretion. He won't discuss his salary, or take sides out in the open. Edward R. Murrow, Fred Friendly, Howard K. Smith, Harry Reasoner, Daniel Schorr, the Kalb brothers, Roger Mudd, and many others have left the company at various times and in varying degrees of anger, but Cronkite is, as his wife Betsy puts it, "a company man," right down to his cuff links, which bear the CBS logo. Even after he was briefly dumped from convention coverage in 1964, in an effort to boost ratings, he did not complain, and soon regained his place without a murmur.

THIS STEADFAST devotion to the company makes him seem, paradoxically, a thing apart. While we know the terms in Barbara Walters's contract, we cannot imagine Cronkite even having one. His apparent detachment from television's corporate world seems to confirm a more general air of alienation from the medium: he is on television, not of it. He is a tireless critic of the excesses of television news: "happy talk" ("It denigrates the news and hurts our image"), "hypercompression," and so on. Cronkite seems to be on television by some happy accident.

But Cronkite's popularity cannot be understood outside the context of television and television news. His "weight" seems more impressive on a lightweight medium; his air of sober calm has all the more effect within television's endless stream of disconnected fibs and trifles. When we take comfort in Cronkite's image, we are struggling with anxieties created by television itself.

Television has opened our eyes to the rest of the world and its afflictions. This is its unpleasant duty. We watch night after night, and the experience ought to teach us more and more, yet it is less informative than overwhelming. The sheer number of ugly revelations, exhibited in quick succession, creates a cumulative sense of chaos. Moreover, by ignoring the causes of events and neglecting to put things in historical perspective, news shows make the world seem not only hectic, but completely irrational: Iranian mobs appear on the streets of Tehran as if by spontaneous generation, overthrowing their rightful leader and insulting us for no apparent reason; thousands die in El Salvador, presumably because Latin Americans are rather excitable; and so on.

Unexplained, these isolated events seem to have no past. Thus the TV news merely does to daily history what television does to reality. In an eternal present, television erases everything that isn't on the screen right now: World War II, pet rocks, the ayatollah, Pittsburgh, Cheryl Tiegs, and whatever you saw 10 seconds ago are all equal in extinction, "off the air." Television news is therefore even more forgettable than yesterday's papers.

WHAT DOES Walter Cronkite have to do with all these senseless and forgettable fragments? It has become a commonplace that Cronkite makes sense of each day's chaos: "Television made it possible to see all this, to see while it was happening," Theodore White writes about Cronkite. "But someone had to impose an intelligence on it, give a coherence to the random events." In fact, Cronkite does nothing so deliberate: the Evening News is full of unresolved crises. It is his mere presence that creates an illusion of order, as if by magic. But his powers only seem necessary to dispel the absurdity created by the news. Moreover, in a medium that obliterates the past, Cronkite is himself a tradition, a stable presence. And his persona lends a momentary aura of history to news items that have been cut off from history.

When Walter Cronkite is finally freed next month from these strange obligations, what will he do? Despite his wealth, his influence, and his golden reputation, he has been rigidly confined for years. All newsmen are inhibited by the journalist's code of objectivity, but Cronkite has been venerated as "the most objective" as well as "the most trusted," and therefore has been the most constrained of all.

He has not allowed himself to speak out on those public issues which, presumably, he knows so well ("My lips have been buttoned for the last 20 years"), and he has been unable to take part in any investigative reporting, although he has the kind of stature that could persuade the public to take all kinds of salutary steps. In short, he wields enormous power, as long as he doesn't use it. When he retires from the Evening News, will he use that power and sacrifice his image? Or will he appear from time to time as Walter Cronkite?

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

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Every art has artists who are influential without being widely known. In the film world Abel Gance, now 91, has exemplified that condition through the century. There he has been, alive and well in Paris and sometimes working; and there were his films, known to some of the profession but not to many others.

In 1957 Jean-Luc Godard wrote: "The modern cinema owes Abel Gance as great a debt as the automobile owes André Citroën. . . ." But the modern cinema is only now getting around to pay it, or some of it, and in great measure this is because of Kevin Brownlow, the English film historian and filmmaker. For many years Brownlow has been scavenging and retrieving and patching and has at last come up with as good a version as we are likely to get of Gance's *Napoleon*, a four-hour silent film first shown in Paris in 1927 and subsequently ravaged.

Earlier versions have been shown here. I saw a fairly substantial print at the New York Film Festival in 1967. Brownlow's is the fullest and has just been shown in New York at the Radio City Music Hall (where else?), presented by Zoetrope Studios, Francis Ford Coppola's company. His father, Carmine Coppola, composed an orchestral score—with acknowledged assists from Beethoven, Berlioz, and others; Coppola senior conducted the orchestra and organist in the music that accompanied the huge film throughout, the organist coming in solo once in a while to give the band a rest. (Plans are in the works to show the film with live musical accompaniment in at least 10 other US cities: the music will then be recorded for showings of the film elsewhere.)

Gance began life as a law clerk to please his father and became an actor at 19 to please himself. (He plays Saint-Just in *Napoleon*, a smooth, proud, scalpel-sharp performance.) He entered films as an actor in 1909, soon began writing and directing short films, made two features and then was drafted into World War I. Right at the end of the war he made a pacifist film, *J'Accuse*, which he re-made as a sound film in 1937; the latter was released here as *That They May Live*. (It's merely speaking accurately to say, more than 40 years later, that Victor Francen's performance in the leading role is unforgettable. He plays a war veteran driven mad by the approach of another war, and I can hear him calling the World War I dead of every nation in their own languages to arise.) The only other Gance film I've seen is *Beethoven* with Harry Baur, which I remember as the best in that dubious genre of life-of-a-composer films.

But those two, plus others that could be cited, make *Napoleon* an anomaly in Gance's career as well as in the film world. His broad and fervent worship of the moral hero—the pacifist and the composer, for instances—was utterly swept away by adoration of a military-political genius and by an infatuation with La Gloire that makes De Gaulle seem reticent. (De Gaulle reportedly saw *Napoleon* in 1927 and responded as one might expect.) The film takes its hero only up to his marriage with Josephine de Beauharnais and his appointment to command the army of Italy; despite its mammoth size, Gance intended it to be just the first of six films on the life of Napoleon. Nothing more was done, but the patriotic zeal that sparked the project burns through the first part. The boy Napoleon's pet eagle is the key symbol, and at times we even glimpse La Belle France herself, waving her sword and inspiring her children.

Gance chose good collaborators. His chief cinematographer was Jules Kruger, already well known, later better known for such films as *They Were Five* and *Pepe le Moko*. Some of the photography was done by Léonce-Henry Burel, who had done much work with Gance and later worked for Robert Bresson (*Diary of a Country Priest, A Man Escaped*). One of the assistant directors was Anatole Litvak, later to make *Mayerling* and a lot of American films. The art director was Alexandre Benois, one of Diaghileff's chief designers here doing his first film work. The designs for Napoleon's Paris lodgings, the Club des Cordeliers, and the Convention are only three examples of Benois's mastery.

The cast is Napoleon. The dozens of others (not to mention the massive crowds) are all right, with one exception, but the film is sustained by Albert Dieudonné in the title role. Dieudonné, who had often worked with Gance earlier, seems at first as if he's going to be grotesquely intense, but soon we're convinced that this is Napoleon's intensity, the almost manic singlemindedness of the man born under a star who believes in his destiny. Along the way we get a glimpse of the 16-year-old Annabella, making her debut four years before she did Clair's *Le Million* and went on to Hollywood. The only really bad performance is by Antonin Artaud, mugging away like mad as Marat—nothing like the work he did for Carl Dreyer the following year in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*.

The film was made by the same temperament that wrote the script,

Films Worth Seeing

Breaker Morant. Another rigged wartime court-martial, this time the Boer War. The same old ironies, but very crisply acted and directed.

Kagemusha. Akira Kurosawa, at 70, with a true epic about 16th-century warriors. If not his best work, still magnificent.

Raging Bull. Robert De Niro and Martin Scorsese put a temperament in a pressure-cooker. The life of a prize-fighter becomes an archetype of lonely anger.

Tess. Roman Polanski doesn't fulfill Hardy's novel, but his film has some beauties of its own, Nastassia Kinski among them.

SK

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that chose the symbols and saw Napoleon in a secular halo. The picture begins with prophecy. In a schoolyard snowball fight the boy Napoleon is undauntable. Point One. When a geography teacher gives the class a lesson on islands and mentions St. Helena, something vibrates in the boy. Point Two. When some other boys spitefully set Napoleon's pet eagle free, the bird returns from the sky to join the disconsolate boy. Point Three. What keeps us gripped through all this 19th-century previsionary corn is the passion of the director. Though the filmmaking came from the same fount as the script, the direction is fresh and vigorous—with lithe tracking and editing—where the script is mechanical. At one point during a dormitory pillow fight, the screen bursts into subdivisions until there are nine panels. (I couldn't help thinking of the dormitory pillow fight in Vigo's *Zéro de Conduite*, made six years afterward. Vigo had tried, unsuccessfully, to get a job of some kind on the Gance film.)

The next sequence is some 10 years later in Paris, 1789, at the Club des Cordeliers where Rouget de Lisle sings his new song, "La Marseillaise," and young Lieutenant Bonaparte congratulates him on doing more for the Revolution than some armies will do. There's no longer any question that we are in the hands of a romantic director of high power. The crowd picks up the song, the cutting accelerates from face to face, and at the last the figure of La France is superimposed over the singing mob. This pattern recurs—a speed-up of cutting toward the end of a sequence with superimpositions as capstone—and it works every time.

Napoleon's visit to Corsica and his escape to the mainland in a small boat through a stormy sea; the concurrent forensic storm in the Convention; the siege of Toulon; the marriage to Josephine; the visit to the empty Convention hall; the assumption of command in northern Italy—all these come in for full-blooded, explosively imaginative, absolutely *convinced* treatment. And as Napoleon rallies his army for the invasion of the Po Valley, the frame opens to what we have been waiting for—Gance's famous triple-screen panorama. Originally there were three other triptych sequences, now lost. The one that remains makes a fine climax as the bedraggled army rouses itself and begins to march with—can you believe it?—the eagle at last superimposed and

Albert Dieudonné as Napoleon

the three screens colored blue, white, and red.

Overwhelming is the word. All through the film, no matter how easily we can discern the contrivances to make Napoleon a stoic master who never errs, the sentiments from recruiting posters, the revived Byronic swirl, they sweep us along. Much has been written about Gance's daring with the camera—mounting it on a pendulum or on a horse or on an actor's chest—and certainly his insistent cinematic ingenuity makes the picture pulsate. So do the splendid compositions and images, the (seemingly) thunderous deployment of crowds. But what is really conquering us here is the cinematic use of 19th-century theater, the popular theater being exploited to the full in a new medium by a master who knows both theater and film—which is also the key to much of D. W. Griffith.

Who could help responding? Who would want not to respond? But even before the cheering fades, questions come. First, are we cheering cinematic ingenuity or cinematic chronology? The audience shouts when, in the long-shot triptych, horsemen suddenly cross the screen in foreground, or when the screen subdivides into nine cells, but what's being cheered, in an age when those matters are the daily bread of Cinerama and TV commercials, is the fact that they were done *then*. It's the date that is being applauded, more than the accomplishment or its intrinsic value. As for the latter, Godard wrote:

> On the center screen, a battalion on the march; on the side screens, Bonaparte galloping along a road. . . . After a few minutes we feel we have traveled all the thousands of kilometers of that prodigious Italian campaign.

Then Godard adds:

> So the triple screen . . . may in certain scenes provoke supplementary effects in the sphere of pure sensation, but no more; and I admire Renoir, Welles or Rossellini precisely because they achieve a similar or even superior result by more logical means, breaking the frame but not destroying it.

I'm not out to derogate the pleasures of "pure sensation," nor was Godard, I'd guess. I just want to look carefully at the terms that are now flying in Gance's direction, among which "genius" is the coolest.

There's still another reason why we cheer *Napoleon*. We're cheering for the future that the film form seemed to have at the time that *Napoleon* was made. This was the era when Gance and his friend, the critic Ricciotto Canudo, and many others were celebrating film as the art toward which all other arts had been tending through history, as the art of renewed and yet unimagined possibilities. The fabric and fire of *Napoleon* say as much about that faith as they do about the content of the picture. And that faith is very moving, in a poignant way, to people today who care about film. Fine films get made in our day—finer ones than *Napoleon*, in my view—but that kind of faith is not their dynamics. Not everything is known, can ever be known, about the technique

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and aesthetics of film, but the explorations now take place in a seemingly delimited territory.

That insufficiently read American critic, Harry Alan Potamkin, who died in 1933, admired much of Gance greatly but said that he "was Hugo without Hugo's vision. That makes him the counterpart in cinema to Eugene Sue." My own vote for counterpart would be Edmond Rostand. If the author of *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *L'Aiglon* had written and directed a film about Napoleon, it might conceivably have been this one. The neglect of Gance stands high on the long list of the film world's shames. Everyone must be happy that his biggest film is now tolerably restored and available, must hope that all his work will soon follow. Gance should have had his rightful important place long ago. Restitution tends to exaggerate.

Robert Brustein on theater

The Sound of Music

Lately a number of stage directors—John Dexter, Peter Hall, Andrei Serban, Jonathan Miller—have been trying their hands at opera; Sarah Caldwell's production of *Macbeth* at the Vivian Beaumont reveals how an opera conductor directs a play. The grisly results should satisfy those critics who always complain—when they see American Shakespeare—that they haven't heard the "music." This version is practically all music; at times, in fact, I could swear I was watching Verdi.

The irony is that at the very moment the operatic form is being provided with some of the direct and natural acting values of the theater, the theater is being endowed with operatic artificiality. Is this some sort of transartistic revenge? Miss Caldwell has made genuine advances in her own field, but this *Macbeth* sets back the history of the theater at least 100 years—well, perhaps only 30 years, since the Michael Benthall regime at the Old Vic inflicted a similar sclerosis on Shakespeare in the 1950s. The principals seem to be vocalizing instead of acting, the soliloquies sound like arias, the extras are arranged in the formal patterns of a chorus, and even the weird sisters—dressed in sumptuous irridescent gowns and wearing long green fright wigs—have been required to transfer a portion of their incantation into song. Meanwhile, Edward Barnes's half-lyrical, half-dissonant music insinuates itself into the play as a competitive counterpoint, perhaps a direct appeal for attention from the local music critics. I half expected to see Sarah's baton waving from the pit, signaling the poor benighted performers to pick up the tempo, for Christ's sake.

As for the physical setting, designed by Herbert Senn and Helen Pond, this starts with an opera drop decorated with stylized wheels, which soon opens to reveal a painted set piece and, when the teaser is raised, a long metallic scaffolding, 15 feet above the actors' heads, running the width of the cavernous Beaumont stage. This is the location for much of the action, including a portion of Banquo's ghost scene, and it is a sight to see the cast clanking up and down an unwieldy set of metal steps in heavy armor and long gowns, hastily trying to reach the top in time for the next speech ("My God," whispered my distraught companion, "it's a play about a tenement").

After the opening scenes—a few moments of that desultory sword rattling that passes for battle in opera, a punk rock interlude starring the weird sisters, and the introduction of Duncan in a Father Christmas beard—we are prepared for the entrance of Philip Anglim, fresh from his contortionist triumph in *The Elephant Man*. Mr. Anglim has been charged with persuading us that he has the talent and experience to play Macbeth, despite much evidence to the contrary, including a set of wispy face hairs. Not only is it obvious they have sent a boy to do a man's job, but the moment he opens his mouth to warble over the fairness and foulness of the day, it is clear we are in the presence of another glottal baritone—one, unfortunately, who has been endowed with a range of only two notes. With one he shows resentment (mouth turned down) over Duncan's preference for his own children and with the other expresses surprise (eyebrows raised) over an imaginary dagger suspended a few feet from his head. Aside from these few manifestations of sullenness, however, Mr. Anglim manages to spare us any of the tragic dimensions of the part, not surprisingly since, to judge from his recent interviews, this actor's most disappointing experience seems to have been getting his applications rejected by drama schools. Enter Lady Macbeth (Maureen Anderman), looking in her long red wig and low-cut gown more like Richard Strauss's Salome, to sing an aria about her yearning to be unsexed. Little chance of that when she has already convinced us she is one of sexiest and best-dressed women in medieval Scotland.

Miss Anderman has more opportunity to demonstrate her talents as a fashion pace-setter in the coronation scene that follows (who told you *Macbeth* contains no coronation scene?). This takes place in the cathedral at Scone, and provides an important occasion for a contest of conspicuous consumption. Costumed in ermine and sumptuous multicolored fabrics, the new king and queen obviously take first prize, but their beautifully dressed courtiers are no slouches either—even the first murderer ("weary with disaster"?) enjoys a touch of sartorial splendor. In addition, the banquet scene is complete with a four-course meal—presented first to Lady Macbeth for her approval—accompanied by drinking songs ("Here's to good health, good drink, and digestion") and lots of clanking tankards. In short, one's attention is continually being distracted from the machinations of the plot to the affluent new court style.

By this point I was becoming convinced that the director was intruding a social-political statement. Considering the dowdiness of the Duncan regime, was it possible that the opulence of the Macbeth administration was some kind of hidden comment on the Reagan inaugural? Anyhow, the same questions bothering commentators about the new president were beginning to plague me about the new king. How was he going to fight his wars when he had already emptied the royal exchequer to subsidize costumes and parties? The cost of this production alone could probably have funded a new bomber, not to mention the space shuttle, the abandoned poverty programs, and the shortfall in Social Security.

The play, in short, seems to have been mounted less by a stage director

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than by an interior decorator. Lacking any real feeling for action or character, Miss Caldwell has devoted her energies to designing the rituals—filling the void with that "twinkling" and "thumping" that Jonathan Miller has identified as the tokens of conventionalized Shakespeare. Poor Mr. Anglim has been forced to take the rap for this catastrophe—theater critics always get angry at someone they have overrated—but I think it only fair of him to share it with the rest of his colleagues, on stage and off. To be sure, *Macbeth* is a notoriously difficult play to produce (most actors are afraid even to pronounce the title) and I confess to having made a mess of it myself about 10 years ago. Furthermore, my judgments are based on a partial viewing, since I irresponsibly packed for home following the intermission. But my quarrel with the portion I saw is not over the approach; it is over the lack of it. This *Macbeth* is all surface and display, as if the Beaumont had decided to present its subscribers with a medieval version of their own ostentatious privilege.

A word about billing. This organization still represents itself as the Lincoln Center Theater Company, a deception which immediately exposes itself not only on the stage but in the program. A theater company has no stars; it lists its actors alphabetically. Yet the title page of the *Macbeth* program places Philip Anglim and Maureen Anderman over the title of the play in large bold letters. The rest of the actors appear in smaller letters below the title, listed alphabetically but in four different sizes of type. This, in effect, establishes five distinct species of status for the "company," a circumstance which must have kept the Crinkley adminstration in lively negotiation with the actors' agents. The performers *are* all listed alphabetically on the page marked *Dramatis Personae*—a place traditionally reserved for identifying actors in order of appearance. Was this change in procedure influenced by the fact that the names of Maureen Anderman and Philip Anglim both begin with A, and thus are the first to appear on that page? Some day, American actors will earn their right to this kind of vanity—but only after they have served their time in real companies playing a variety of parts in serious productions. To judge by its first two offerings, the Lincoln Center Theater Company is not the place they will start.

Are there any writers left in the Soviet Union?

A Disabled Literature

by Carl R. Proffer

Official Soviet Russian literature is like wheelchair basketball: one may be impressed by the vigor of the players, or the remarkable muscles developed in limited areas, and individual stars do emerge—but there is something fundamentally wrong with it. And it isn't really basketball. The Soviet writer's handicap is clear—totalitarian control in the literal meaning of the word "total." There are entire areas of human life which Soviet writers are forced to lie about, or, at very best, to ignore. For example: history, philosophy, politics, all other countries, education, industry, agriculture, religion, and sex. Writers breathe these restrictions through every pore; then they are told to write something called "socialist realism."

In practice this means an all-thumbs imitation of the Turgenev line of the 19th-century Russian novel in characterization and style, including obligatory nature descriptions which sound like the Woody Allen parodies in *Love and Death*. It is not easy to write a realistic novel without telling the truth, so the Soviet writer's task is unenviable. Of course, in theory it is possible for a writer of genius to take any number of restrictions, overcome them, even turn them to his advantage; but in practice there are no convincing examples of

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Basic Rights

Subsistence, Affluence, and U.S. Foreign Policy

Henry Shue

Which human rights ought to be the first honored and the last sacrificed? In the first systematic attempt by an American philosopher to address this issue as it relates to U.S. foreign policy, Henry Shue proposes an original conception of basic rights that illuminates both the nature of moral rights generally and the determination of which specific rights are the *basic* ones.

Dr. Shue argues that subsistence rights are of equal priority with rights to security and to liberty and that these three are basic rights that should be promoted, or at least not violated, by U.S. foreign policy. In conclusion, he recommends an effective official acknowledgment that subsistence rights are basic rights, the cessation of both economic and security assistance to all governments engaged in essential and systematic deprivation of basic rights, and the prevention of the thwarting of U.S. policies toward basic rights by U.S.-based corporations.

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this. I cannot think of a single work of merit published in the USSR which would have been written as it was if the author knew that he would not have to worry about the censors and editors who would scrutinize his work. And I am speaking of the most honest Soviet writers.

The clearest example is Vladimir Voinovich. The first volume of his novel *The Life and Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* was written in the belief that it would somehow get published in the Soviet Union (it didn't, and turned out to be one of the major factors in removing Voinovich from Soviet libraries and life); the second volume, written when he knew it would be published only abroad, is markedly different, sharper in its satire, more vehement in its anger. The first volume was honest in most ways, but the second is as different as if Voinovich had had an arrow removed from his throat. (On Christmas day 1980, Voinovich left the USSR.)

One can follow the careers of several authors from works they knew would be published at home, to ones they were hopeful about, to ones they were dubious about, and then to works they knew were only for "free" publication. All of the stages are clearly visible as the author gradually liberates himself. Thus even in Solzhenitsyn's case one goes from a version of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* written for a Soviet journal to his latest full version. Whether anyone can truly and completely liberate himself after 40 years in the USSR is another question, and a major one, which awaits its answer.

The interested reader, incidentally, need not take my word for all this. Soviet cultural supervisors hypocritically complain that Soviet literature is not available in the United States; but Soviet Russian literature is actually more available here than it is in the USSR, and much of it is translated by the Soviets' own English-language propaganda mill, Progress Publishers, and sold at cut-rate prices, mainly to a gullible third-world audience. Their monthly magazine *Soviet Literature* (in English and eight other languages) is readily available in this country. I recommend it as the best way to get the official Soviet party view of Russian literature. It is what the editors (some of the most senile mossbacks in the party apparatus) imagine is the acme of Soviet literature, but it would be hard intentionally to put together a more puerile compendium of swill. Progress also publishes a line of books, including include 19th-century classics, a few contemporaries worth reading (Iskander, Nagibin, Soloukhin, Shukshin), but mainly party bozos who have no hope of ever being translated by Western publishing houses. A small library of these, even making allowances for the occasionally lunatic English, will convince the reader that much Soviet literature is simple-minded, provincial, aimed essentially at children, and (aside from the politics) on the level of *Little Men* or the *Boy's Life* inspirational fiction of the 1950s.

Now let us leave aside "most" Soviet literature and concentrate on a few gen-

LOST LETTER TO JAMES WRIGHT, WITH THANKS FOR A MAP OF FANO

Breathing his last music, Mozart is supposed
To have said something heartbreaking which escapes me
For the quick moment of your bending to a dime

Blinking up from York Avenue, the last chill evening
I ever saw you, laughter rising with the steam
From your scarred throat, long-remembering laughter,

"Well, the old *eye* is still some good, anyway."
I thought of your silent master Samuel Johnson
Folding the fingers of drowsing vagrant children

Secret as wings over the coppers he left in their palms
Against the London cold and tomorrow's hunger.
You could not eat, I think you could scarcely swallow,

And yet that afternoon of your sleep and waking
To speak with us, you read me a fugitive passage
From a book beside your chair, something I lose all track of

Now, in this dim hour, about the late driftwood letters
Of writers and how little they finally matter.
You wrote to me last from Sirmione (of all things,

Sirmione had turned gray that morning), and it mattered.
We were together when the gray December dusk
Came down on snapshots of the view from Sirmione,

Sunlight ghosting your beard on the beach at Fano.
I had thought to write you a letter from Fano,
A letter which could have taken years to reach you

On the slow river ways of the Italian mails,
And now I write before we even come to leave.
We are going to Fano, where we may unfold this map

At a strange street corner under a window box
Of thyme gone to flower, and catch our breath remembering
Mozart breathing his last music, managing

Somehow to say in time, "And now I must go,
When I have only just learned to live quietly."
Last time I saw you, walking a little westward

From tugboats in the harbor, your voice was already breaking,
You were speaking quietly but the one plume of your breath
Was clouding and drifting west and away from Fano

Toward the river ferry taking sounding after sounding.

Gibbons Ruark

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uine artists. The very concept of "Soviet literature" is complicated enough to require definition. There are four kinds of Soviet *Russian* writers: (1)those who live and publish in the USSR exclusively; (2) those who live in the USSR and publish most of their work there, but some works only abroad, in Russian; (3) those who live in the USSR and publish exclusively abroad; (4) those who were born in the USSR, educated there, and spent most of their lives there, but who have emigrated in the last eight years and now publish exclusively abroad.

These writers are basically all part of the same Russian literature of the Soviet period. They share a common heritage, language, and general subject matter—i.e., life in the USSR. They read and write for one another and their Soviet audience, both the Soviet audience in the USSR and that composed of some 350,000 émigrés. (One should note that the official Soviet definition of "Soviet literature" is quite different: they insist that Soviet literature is "multinational" and that one who wants to discuss it must know the writings of the Azerbaijanis, Karakulalpakians, Latvians, and 50 other language groups. In fact, because of the Russians' imperial enslavement of all these other nationalities, each national literature is merely an inferior copy of the power culture's own party literature. The best of it is translated into Russian immediately, and writers such as Aitmatov, Dumbadze, and Bykov may almost be treated as Russian writers. All are under the same central censorship and control. When squeezed firmly in interviews, they all make the same noises.)

I will focus primarily on the established writers, not the new ones. While there is a degree of subjectivity in this, I think any reasonably informed person would mention Trifonov and Rasputin (category 1), Bitov and Iskander (category 2), Vladimov (category 3), Aksyonov and Voinovich (formerly of category 1, later in category 2, and then recently, in the last year or two, in category 3, and during the writing of this essay shifting into category 4). Except for Rasputin, all have lived most recently in Moscow, and they know one another reasonably well. They have shared the same language and experience, and they are Soviet in their subject matter—in spite of Iskander's and Rasputin's special settings.

* * *

Among Soviet Russian writers who have not published in Russian abroad, Yury Trifonov is certainly preeminent. To return to my opening comparison again, he is so good that one can often forget the fact that he is in that wheelchair. If one wants to know what Soviet urban life is and has been like, no Soviet writer provides a better picture than Trifonov. His prose is a solid machine moving methodically through the moral and material crises of the intelligentsia and the middle class. The stories in the trilogy *The Long Goodbye* are set in the present. His more recent, and ambitious, novels are largely historical. These include *The House on the Embankment* and what he regards as his most important work, *The Old Man*. And while Trifonov is an honest writer who is controversial in the USSR because of his candor and boldness, he has to leave much beneath the surface. One senses a submerged anger in Trifonov, and it is doubtful that *The House on the Embankment* would contain so much that is purely implicit if he had written it "for abroad." Indeed, non-Soviet readers will miss much that Trifonov's home readers immediately understand—because of their shared experiences with Stalin and the history of the party leaders in that "house" (an apartment house) on the embankment. Virtually all of Trifonov's mature works already or soon will exist in translations into English,

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French, and German, so any reader can see for himself that Trifonov is an important contemporary European writer.

THE OPPOSITION between city and country has been an important theme in Soviet writing from the start, and for the last 25 years country prose has been discussed exhaustively by Soviet critics and writers, with conclusions of all kinds (including the conclusion that it does not exist). Until his death in 1974, Shukshin was popularly regarded as the leading practitioner. Now the field belongs to such established writers as Fyodor Abramov, Viktor Astafiev, Vasily Belov, Boris Mozhaev, Vladimir Soloukhin, Vitali Syomin, and Valentin Rasputin. At their best they help revitalize the homogenized and bureaucratized literary language that central control of literature has promoted; they present unusual character types and show a small part of how rural life and agriculture have been devastated by the Soviet regime (for example, such things as pigs being fed black bread instead of grain, because it is cheaper and more plentiful). They show traditional emotions and traditional values. These features help explain why Solzhenitsyn has repeatedly praised the country writers (though one should take Solzhenitsyn's desire to be admired for his country prose style as seriously as a Playmate wanting to be loved for her mind). At its worst, which I think is more often the case, country prose is provincial, monotonous, and sentimental. Sometimes it is nothing more than barely fictionalized ethnography, as artistic as *The Loves of the Plants* and more tedious than Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*. Its interest for non-Soviet readers is mainly sociological, and this is not just because the culture is so alien. The world of Márquez is no less alien—but as he presents it, it is alive; the fullness, passion, and color of life delight us. The bovine plod of much Soviet rural prose is soporific.

* * *

The country writer who has received most attention in the past few years is Valentin Rasputin (born 1937). He is a Siberian, and his view and knowledge of the world are naturally rather different from what they would be if he were from the literary capitals. He has achieved a high level of honesty in describing life in his native regions; this and the fact that his prose style is rich—avoiding both the homogenized party lingo and the extremes of dialect—make him a hope for the future. Because he is now being touted by the establishment as a success story, it will be interesting to see what happens to him. So far he has refused to do the hack work and jingoistic essays, the kinds of things that are usually demanded of an officially successful career (messages to the people on Soviet holidays, etc.). It seems to me that, given Rasputin's realism and honesty, it will be extremely difficult for him to remain detached, and moreover as he approaches his mid-40s (traditionally the peak years for a prose writer) he may discover he has written something so truthful and so good that it will be unpublishable in his homeland. His attraction to tragedy, the irrational, and traditional humane values would seem to drive him toward this point. His interest for the non-Soviet reader is somewhat questionable. His novel *Live and Remember* was published here by Macmillan without creating any stir. A much fuller novel, *Goodbye to Matyora*, recently published here, may have more success.

* * *

Of all the writers in the USSR, Fazil Iskander (born 1929) is surely the one whose works can best survive translation and cultural export. One can easily imagine him becoming a best seller in this country. This is somewhat paradoxical, because, though he writes in Russian, Iskander comes from a tiny nation that few Americans have ever heard of—Abkhazia. This so-called republic lies beside Georgia on the Black Sea. As the world will discover sooner or later, Iskander is the Gabriel Garcia Márquez of Abkhazia. The major work of Iskander's life is a novel called *Sandro from Chegem*. In a series of semi-independent tales, Iskander tells the 80-year story of Uncle Sandro from the 1880s to the 1960s—and Sandro's story is also the story of the Abkhazian people, with all their customs, superstitions, passions, and sufferings. In Iskander's case regionalism is not a barrier to understanding, because there is an epic, universal quality to his writing. He is a comic writer, and certainly much of the value of *Sandro* as entertainment is due to the humor. But like many comic writers, Iskander is basically serious—even melancholic, reminiscent of Gogol. The long and wonderful section on Stalin in *Sandro*, entitled "The Feast of Belszhazzar," shows both Iskander's dark and light sides. The unflattering picture of a republic under Soviet domination is so violently at variance with the idealized, paternalistic Muscovite view that *Sandro*, the great work of Iskander's life (and no doubt of his people), quickly ran afoul of the censors. Roughly 10 percent of the novel was published in Moscow as if it were the whole work (1973). In 1978 a then complete edition was published in Russian by Ardis, and next spring an expanded version will come out, making the novel almost as long as *War and Peace*.

Iskander's is an especially depressing case. He is a writer of the first rank, and he obviously has very little interest in politics as such. By no stretch of the imagination could he be called a dissident. *Sandro* was obviously a book from the heart and soul; its satire is more Horatian than Juvenalian, and only the unreasoning practices of Soviet literary superintendents kept a Soviet publishing house from having the honor of bringing out a book that would truly make the world look on with envy.

* * *

Andrei Bitov (born 1937) is also in the prime of his career. His prose style is instantly recognizable. The serpentine syntax, the complex series of subordinations, the startling but graceful use of abstractions and metaphors present a formidable challenge to the translator. For over a decade Bitov has been known at home mainly as the author of short prose pieces, and some of these, such as "A Country Place," are masterful; but others turned out to be disguised sections of a large novel—the major work of his life—which Bitov could not get printed in the USSR: *Pushkin House* (in Russian the title refers to the main literary archive in Leningrad, which houses all the papers of the classics, and also to Russia itself, Pushkin's "home").

The novel was published in Russian in the United States in 1978 to almost universal acclaim. If Hemingway was Trifonov's early master, Bitov's masters are obviously Dostoevsky and Nabokov. Among other things, they share St. Petersburg (Leningrad). Like Nabokov's *The Gift*, *Pushkin House* is a "museum of Russian literature." It is the story of a 20th-century, Soviet superfluous man, a "hero of his time" (the post-Stalin generation), who is playing his own version of "fathers and sons." The classic Russian novels of the last century echo on almost every page, and one can say that an important

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theme in *Pushkin House* is the Russian novel and its development. Bitov's deeply introspective attention to motivation puts him with Dostoevsky as a psychological novelist; and Dostoevsky's characters, in modern dress, and character relationships are everywhere. But Dostoevsky's journalese, supernumeraries, and messy structures are foreign to Bitov. Instead we find a neatly planned modern novel with strong suggestions of Nabokov in the structural symmetries, character parallels, the use of literary allusion, fatidic numbers, intentional ambiguities, and undermining of the fictional reality by variant versions of important events. As a melding of traditional and modern elements, *Pushkin House* is a true *tour de force*. It is as much Bitov's modern form and style that made the novel unpublishable at home as it was the themes—which include the sins of the fathers during Stalin's rule, the relative virtues of aristocracy and meritocracy, and alcohol as a Russian institution. But even if Bitov writes nothing else, his permanent place in Russian literature has been firmly established.

* * *

Readers of Soviet literature have been familiar with the name of Vasily Aksyonov since the early 1960s when his first stories established him as the spokesman of a new generation, the post-Stalin intelligentsia, the young liberals who helped deepen the thaw. "Halfway to the Moon" and "A Ticket to the Star" were tremendously influential stories, and Aksyonov became the most popular Soviet prose writer. But rapid fluctuations in the political temperature were reflected in his career; his works were published, but erratically and in censored form. His efforts to expand the stylistic, structural, and thematic limits of Soviet writing presented a continual challenge to editorial and political conservatives. In 1979 Aksyonov's last major literary work was published—his translation of E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*. It was a sensation for the Russians, and in spite of the editor's red ink, Aksyonov managed to preserve some frank sexual descriptions. This brought down the wrath of the party; the editor was summoned to the Central Committee with the original in one hand and Aksyonov's version in the other. Separate book publication (it had appeared only in a journal) was forbidden.

But it was Aksyonov's role in putting together the *Metropol* anthology of prose and poetry by 23 Soviet writers that was the last straw for the authorities. After *Metropol* was rejected by the Union of Writers and then published in the West, Aksyonov resigned from the union over their harassment of the less well-known contributors to the anthology. Led by a smooth-talking hack named Felix Kuznetsov, a campaign of threats, blackmail, and blacklisting was conducted against the 23 writers. Aksyonov's departure from the Soviet Union this summer was one result. He is currently lecturing at American universities. In January he was deprived of Soviet citizenship.

When Aksyonov's long novel *The Burn* appeared in Italian translation in early 1980, Yury Maltsev, the best-known chronicler of émigré Russian letters, wrote:

> *The Burn* has created a sensation. It is a monumental work which the author labored over for six years. It is undoubtedly the high point of his career, his most profound, most mature and most brilliant work; it immediately moves Aksyonov to the front ranks of Russian literature today.

Subtitled "The Late Sixties, the Early Seventies," *The Burn* is set mainly in the period from the Prague Spring to the beginning of the "Third Wave" of emigration in 1973-74. It is a social, political, and philosophical chronicle in the best traditions of Russian literature. Its subject is the destiny of Russia and the Russian people, especially the intelligentsia. In its kaleidoscope we see dozens of characters, hear hundreds of points of view, ranging from the secret police and jazz musicians to intellectuals' kitchen discussions, to those of the average Russian, the simple, crude, beaten-down, and cruel habitués of beer stands and soccer matches. The central device the author uses to take us through Russian thought and feeling in this period is the description of five heroes (a physicist, a doctor, a writer, a sculptor, and a saxophone player), all of whom have the same middle name (patronymic) and all of whom, it turns out in the end, are really parts of one character, a creative Russian (the "burn" of inspiration can be artistic or scientific) who lives through this era and tries to make sense out of Russia and its peculiar kind of totalitarianism. It is not a straightforward narrative, and as in many of Aksyonov's works there is sometimes a mixture of fantasy and reality. The narrator often calls into

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question the reality of the events and characters he creates; the chronology is not linear; the language is rich and inventive. In these three respects Aksyonov's prose is unlike typical Soviet writing. Moreover, in sexual matters it is absolutely candid. Nor are the themes parochial. Aksyonov knows the rest of the world exists, likes it, and is not afraid to use it. His cosmopolitanism was always one of the things that the secretaries of the Union of Writers found suspicious. Good Soviet writers are self-sufficient; nothing outside the Soviet Union really has to be shown (except spies, reactionaries, and drug addicts). The condemnation of Stalin, police, executioners (real and metaphorical, including executioners of ideas), and the system itself is as profound as the author's sympathy for the Russian people. As two fine Russian critics, Peter Vail and Alexander Genis, have said, *The Burn* is an encyclopedia of Soviet life. And it is an attempt to make sense of it all.

While Aksyonov has always been hard to categorize, because he has written in so many genres, from short story to plays, it would seem he is now in his most productive period as a novelist, since *The Burn* has been followed by another major work, *The Crimean Island*, which is soon to appear in Russian. It was written in certainty that it would be published abroad, written at a later time in Aksyonov's life, when he had essentially given up any hope that he could continue to be published in the USSR; and I think that it shows a certain liberation and relaxation that is not so clear in *The Burn* (also unpublished at home, but written when the future seemed more fluid and uncertain). *The Crimean Island* is also rather more conventional than *The Burn* in form, though again we have a mixture of fantasy and realism.

* * *

One of the few Soviet writers still living in the USSR who had a national reputation before becoming known as a dissident, and who has published only abroad for many years, is Georgi Vladimov. His haunting novel *Faithful Ruslan* was published here last year, and received very warm reviews. Some reviewers, and even the publishers, presented it as a "dog story," but that is not really what it is. One does learn a lot about dogs, and how they are trained to guard prisoners in Gulag; but dogs are used mainly to show the character of human beings. What we learn is how one becomes a faithful soldier, how one remains permanently attached to the service, even when circumstances change drastically. Thus Ruslan is trained, becomes the selfless servant, and remains so, even when the camp where he serves is closed down for good. Ruslan is not destroyed as he is supposed to be, but is given to the "shabby man" (a former prisoner). The man thinks the dog is a companion—but Ruslan is really still guarding him. He cannot learn anything new. He is still utterly convinced he is performing his service; he is even noble in his blind belief, and he will kill if need be to go on guarding the man as he always has. It is not hard to see this as an allegory for the Stalinists who could not (and still cannot) change, in spite of Stalin's death. The Ruslans are still there, still obedient to their old training, perhaps even decent and honorable in their own context.

Chilling as this allegory is, it alone would not have created Vladimov's reputation as a writer. The allegory aside, the story he tells is compelling. Bit by bit, Vladimov builds his world. He is a realist in the best sense of the word—he knows the world he is describing down to its finest details, and his prose is as unhackneyed as it is lucid. Actually, Vladimov's national reputation was made with novels about several completely different kinds of world—the world of miners in *The Big Ore* (1961), the world of a Soviet fishing trawler (*Three Minutes of Silence*, 1969). He recreated each of these disparate realms with precision and candor, for the most part (even though the works were printed) avoiding the clichés of construction novels and socialist realism.

The progression of Vladimov's works, as is the case with most good Soviet Russian writers, is fairly easy to see in retrospect. The career begins with a subject, at least, which is acceptable, even traditional; and each successive work strains the boundaries of the acceptable a little more. The characters become less conventional, the themes less predictable, the form less clichéd. Behind the scenes the battles over what will be cut grow more intense. At some point the editors and superintendents cannot accept it any longer, and the writer is forced either to capitulate or to accept silence at home. In Vladimov's case, after years of editorial battles, he wrote a noble letter to the Union of Writers excoriating them, saying the only honorable path for a Soviet writer was to resign from the Union of Writers—and he returned his membership card. He was blacklisted everywhere, and *Faithful Ruslan* was published by Possev in Germany in 1975. A few weeks ago Vladimov was summoned to Lefortovo Prison in Moscow and interrogated for several hours. Later that day he had a heart attack. He is still in the hospital as of this writing.

II

There is another kind of Soviet writer who does not have to worry about hospital beds or prison cots. Semiliterate though many of them are, unread as they are, their works are printed in editions of hundreds of thousands of copies—by official decisions overseen by the party officers and KGB (who are attached to every publishing house and the Union of Writers). It doesn't matter how many of the 100,000 copies are bought; the main thing is that the ideology be right, so the writer is paid a royalty for 100,000 and the editor of the publishing house is paid for fulfilling his plan. These are the kinds of writers—and often they are also secretaries of the local writers' unions—who are sent to conferences such as the one Norman Cousins has helped organize and has chaired over the last few years. The most recent of four meetings was in Los Angeles in November. Cousins and the Soviet sponsors say these round-table meetings are intended to deepen mutual understanding. Is there, in fact, frank dialogue between equals? We send writers such as Joyce Carol Oates, John Updike, and Kurt Vonnegut; the Soviets send party functionaries and hopeless Stalinist hacks. The American writers, who are not prepared in advance for what they will face, are puzzled and embarrassed because they don't know the names of their counterparts—and the Soviets say, "See, Americans don't know Soviet literature at all." After the first United States meeting, Miss Oates, whom I had occasionally helped with information about Russian affairs before, wrote to me, concerned about why these nice, earnest fellow writers were not known here. What is happening, of course, is that the American writers are being misled and used. When their names appear beside those of the party hacks in the official Soviet newspapers, the Soviet reader is supposed to think: well, everything's normal, our writers go

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there, theirs come here, they all talk as equals; I guess we're just like they are after all, and Fedorenko is just like a Ray Bradbury or Kurt Vonnegut.

The official Soviet press report on the Los Angeles meeting shows clearly how the Soviets use such meetings. This bulletin appears on the front page of the *Literary Gazette* for November 19 (in itself very unusual these days, for Americans are virtually never mentioned on page one, even negatively), right beside two official resolutions of the Presidium, signed by Brezhnev, granting literary medals to two loyal drudges—one getting the "Order of the October Revolution," the other just the "Order of Friendship among Peoples." The report, in full, reads as follows:

THE SOVIET AND AMERICAN WRITERS' 'ROUND TABLE'

The fourth meeting between Soviet and American writers which just took place in Los Angeles was a notable event in Soviet-American cultural cooperation. Headed by the editor-in-chief of *Foreign Literature*, N. Fedorenko, the Soviet delegation included G. Abashidze, D. Granin, V. Korotich, A. Ivanov, M. Slutskis, I. Stadnyuk, I. Zorina, and Ya. Zasursky. Participants from the American side of the meeting were the editor of the magazine *Saturday Review*, N. Cousins, and also R. Bradbury, E. Albee, E. Doctorow, E. Hardwick, H. Salisbury and others.

'Universal spiritual values and literature—such was the theme of our meeting,' said N. Fedorenko in his interview with the TASS correspondent in San Francisco. 'But it also touched on questions which go beyond the boundaries of this theme and concerned current problems of contemporaneity in the context of the present-day international situation. The Soviet and the American writers underlined the essential need for a dialogue between the peoples of our countries, the urgency of new efforts to forestall the arms race and to preserve peace as the main condition for the creation and production of spiritual values.'

The participants of the round table criticized the new nuclear strategy of the American administration, a strategy allowing the possibility of 'limited' nuclear war. The writers pointed out that in practice this kind of politics could lead to general thermonuclear catastrophe, to the destruction of universal human values created over the course of many centuries.

While understanding many current problems differently, the participants of the round table found points of contact and a common language on the question of the essential need to lessen international tension and return to a dialogue in accord with the spirit of the Helsinki Accords. In many speeches the lofty responsibility of the writer in the contemporary world was mentioned, as was the essential need for the writers to use all means available to them to continue the struggle for the preservation of peace on earth, the strengthening of cooperation.

The participants in the round table concurred that the meetings between American and Soviet writers should be continued with the goal of deepening mutual understanding.

The average Soviet reader will take this, among other things, as confirmation of his country's version of current politics, i.e., the Americans want to stir up a war psychosis, the CIA started invading Afghanistan, but Soviet policy is for peace, and this shows we Russians are trying to achieve peace—and that even well-known American writers agree with our point of view.

The American organizers of these meetings have urged American writers to mollify their counterparts, not to confront the Soviets openly and publicly. For example, when our delegation went to the USSR in 1979, the scandal over the *Metropol* anthology was in progress. The Americans were urged not to bring this up formally. Moreover, Norman Cousins was naively satisfied with the explanation of the affair given him by Felix Kuznetsov, one of the chief ideological watchdogs of the Union of Writers, well known to Russian writers as a cynic who specializes in sanctions. Cousins later passed on the official explanation of the Union of Writers on *Metropol* in his report in the *Saturday Review*, saying no one had really suffered in the end.

When I sent a refutation to the magazine, a letter containing an account of what had happened to many of the contributors to *Metropol* in recent months, a woman from the magazine first called and said they would like to print a part of the letter which did not mention Cousins specifically. But in the end they did not even go that far. One can only guess whose influence killed the truth. Of course, now the full story of *Metropol* is out, in the person of Vasily Aksyonov himself. But people like Cousins prefer to change the subject to disarmament rather than examine their own gullibility.

In Los Angeles, Edward Albee was the only one to address the Soviets as frankly as one would normally address equals (as opposed to coddled guests).

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He made a strong attack on them, asking about official retaliation against dissidents. The reply at first was stunned silence. Then Fedorenko (former Soviet ambassador to China and the UN, to show what kind of writer he is) tried to pass it off by acting as if Albee were a naughty little boy. Fedorenko's formulaic assertion that the so-called dissidents are not really writers, but common criminals, goes back to the 1978 Soviet-American round table. Since they are criminals, they are of no concern to American writers. And so the conference moved majestically on to its topic: "Spiritual Values in Literature."

I should note that even by Soviet standards this latest Soviet delegation was something of a joke. Only Granin, or conceivably Slutskis, might reasonably be considered a writer of any standing. Ivanov and the rest are Union of Writers bully-boys—secretaries of the various branches of the union, editors (censors) of journals, trusted tools. Imagine that we were to send some mid-level Teamster officials and their enforcers to the USSR to discuss spiritual values in literature, and you will have a rough idea of what the Russians sent us. Of course, the Russians know this is all a farce, and they laugh at anyone, like Cousins, who takes it seriously. They cover themselves by including one Americanist each time—Zasursky is a specialist on Western literature, a knowledgeable lackey who toes the party line on every question even before it is laid down. His job is to speak English, show he reads things, and charm the natives.

Such trips to the United States are the most highly sought prizes among Soviet literary superintendents. The make-up of all such delegations is controlled by one man in the Central Committee of the Communist party—Albert Belyaev, the true boss of all Soviet literature. Born in the town of Dirt (to translate the name), this all-powerful bureaucrat and former criminal (according to Kuznetsov's stories to intimates) became a specialist in "ideological warfare" in American proletarian novels of the 1930s, and now passes or rejects writers' applications for foreign passports. Since so few have opportunities for any trip abroad, never mind one that puts them at the same table with writers famous all over the world, they are always on their best behavior. And from the point of view of the bosses, these conferences serve two important purposes: (1) reward of the loyal old dogs, (2) something to report in the papers—i.e., a conference took place (showing not only "we are normal," but that the Helsinki Accords are being carried out faithfully).

* * *

So the answer to the question in the title of this essay is, yes, there are writers in the Soviet Union, and some of them are very talented. There are many others who are very good at writing what they are told to write. But the brain drain of the last eight years is almost without parallel. Among the most visible writers who have left the USSR are Aksyonov, Aleshkovsky, Brodsky, Dovlatov, Galich, Genis, Gladilin, Gorbanevskaya, Korzhavin, Limonov, Mamleev, Maramzin, Maximov, Nekrasov, Popovsky, Sinyavsky, Sokolov, Solzhenitsyn, Suslov, Tsvetkov, Vail, Voinovich, Yefimov, and Zinoviev. Fewer and fewer independent minds remain in the USSR; they work under ever more stringent restraints. And they are surrounded by the mass of party careerists who are mainly interested in the many material rewards that the Union of Writers controls. To get trips, vacations, housing, cars, medical care, and tables at private restaurants, all doled out by the union's secretaries, the obedient writers are anxious to serve as good servants should serve—on their knees.

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The Great Rebellion: Mexico 1905-1924 by Ramón Eduardo Ruiz

(Norton; $24.95)

The prevailing American view of the Mexican Revolution is of an oppressed people rising up against foreign bosses, military dictatorship, and feudalism, recovering national pride, establishing popular rule, liberating the economy, breaking up the old haciendas, casting out arrogant and lazy landlords, returning the land to the worthy peasant, demanding public responsibility from the businessman, and providing justice for the worker: in short, "the first of the 20th-century social revolutions."

In the history of American imagination, this is an interesting view. Conceived by American progressives during the revolution itself as an argument first for and then against US intervention in Mexico, fostered by Ambassador Dwight Morrow in the 1920s to justify US accommodation of a bankrupt Mexican government, intellectually legitimized by Frank Tannenbaum in the 1930s and taught by him to hundreds of students at Columbia in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, it is a projection of American attitudes toward populism onto another civilization's very different contentions.

As an idea of Mexican reality between 1910 and 1920, it is a gross mistake. How gross a mistake became undeniably clear in 1968, in the great pre-Olympics massacre in Mexico City, when hundreds of people were killed in a peaceful civil rights and reform demonstration crushed by the army.

This book by Ramon Ruiz, professor of history at the University of California at San Diego, author of two other books on Mexican history, a National Endowment for the Humanities director, and lately visiting professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, is an important scholarly reinterpretation of the revolution. Its chief merit is its central thesis, that far from a "radical change" of Mexican society the revolution was "essentially a face-lifting of Mexican capitalism, . . . one of the last bourgeois protests of the 19th century, and not . . . the precursor of the socialist explosions of the 20th century."

Ruiz's thesis is not original. As he duly acknowledges, it derives from various Mexican sources. Already in the 1910s and 1920s several influential American observers of Mexico had advanced the precedents for his argument. In the last 15 years American economists, none of whom Ruiz cites, have published books and articles showing basic and superstructural continuities in modern Mexican history. In 1973, in an interpretive essay widely

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distributed and discussed in Mexican intellectual circles, but not cited here either, the French historian Jean Meyer published virtually the same argument as that which Ruiz now presents. But Ruiz has done his own archival research and thoughtfully reviewed almost all the pertinent historical monographs of recent years. His book is the first major statement by an eminent American historian of Mexico that the real revolution was not a triumph of "the people" at large, but a long, violent, specifically bourgeois reform, which crushed other popular uprisings for the sake of better business.

Part I is an account of "The Whys and Whereofs of Rebellion." The specialist will discover no new whys or whereofs, but the ordinary reader will find a full and generally reliable list of the troublesome conditions in Mexico just before the revolution: rapid economic growth disturbing "the traditional structure," the social and political frustration of a new "middle class," the perversion of all branches of government to protect the privileges of a few big insiders, the corruption of the army, increases in the cost of urban living, severe labor strife in the new industries, the aggravation of rural poverty, the rise of nationalism directed especially against the United States, and the 1907 crash and the ensuing recession.

The best part of the book is Part II, "The Cast of Chieftains." Combining his own research with usually obscured but here clearly pointed details from the standard historical literature, Ruiz aptly characterizes the three principal leaders of the revolution: Francisco Madero, president from 1911 to 1913, "Apostle of a Gentlemen's Rebellion"; Venustiano Carranza, president from 1917 to 1920, "The Patrician as a Rebel"; and Álvaro Obregón, president from 1920 to 1924, "The Self-Made Man." He rightly insists on the wealth and extension of the Madero and Carranza families, the deeply conservative liberalism of both the "Apostle" and the "Patrician," and their constant efforts to control popular movements and restore a businessman's order. The chapter on Obregón gives the story of his progress from shoe salesman to chickpea farmer to the divisional general, commodity broker, and millionaire who overthrew Carranza in 1920 to make himself president. It explains well why Obregón proved personally much more flexible than his predecessors in dealing with peasant movements and unions for the reestablishment of the proper order for business. Ruiz shows less judgment in his characterizations of two defeated revolutionaries, Emiliano Zapata ("The Unorthodox Rebel"), assassinated on Carranza's orders in 1919, and Francisco Villa ("The Mexican Robin Hood"), assassinated on Obregón's orders in 1923. But he does a freshly revealing series of sketches of a wide variety of other, more or less successful revolutionaries.

Part III describes the dominant revolutionary economic and social policies and practice. Despite revolutionary rhetoric, the dominant revolutionary leaders never promised much reform to the peasantry or labor, and delivered less. Basically the revolution did not break up the hacienda. It may have forced some old landlords to accept revolutionary partners or to leave ranching or agriculture for other businesses, but in old or new hands the great, privately owned estate remained the typical rural property in Mexico until the 1930s.

Part IV, the last, is on "The Ubiquitous Barriers" in modern Mexican history. Most notable here is a consideration of the United States's effect on the revolution. Ruiz recites three arguments common in the historical literature: (1) "Mexicans failed to carry out a [radical] revolution because the United States would not permit it." (2) " . . . Yankee attitudes, as understood by Mexicans, frightened sincere reformers into believing that any attempt to implement social change invited American intervention." (3) " . . . the cautious and conservative Mexican chieftains exploited the bugaboo of Yankee intervention to hide their unwillingness to alter significantly the status quo. . . ." Ruiz judges that "to some extent" all three arguments are true.

The book has several faults. At the start Ruiz wades into a semantic, anachronistic discussion of the difference between "a rebellion" and "a revolution." Hence the title, *The Great Rebellion*: "the Mexican Revolution" was mostly "a change of rulers" (a rebellion), not "a sudden, violent social and economic catharsis" (a revolution). It would be simpler and historically more fitting to admit that the meaning of "revolution" in the modern world began to change after 1917, that the Mexicans had quite a revolution in the old sense, but only bits in the new. And the resort at the end to Crane Brinton's *Anatomy of Revolution* throws the title and the central thesis into question. If Mexico had "a rebellion," not "a revolution" like France's or Russia's, why refer to a study of these revolutions to explain why "the rebellion" happened? Also Ruiz fails to discuss the most important international trouble bearing on Mexico in the 1910s, the imperialist contention among Great Britain, the United States, and Germany. (Nor does he cite any of the books on the subject.) And he omits Mexico's financial history during its revolution (rebellion?), a vital concern of foreign and native bankers, businessmen, and politicians, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary (rebellious and counter-rebellious?). Moreover, unfortunately, Ruiz's style will repel all but specialists and intensely interested readers. And even they, determined to forgive incorrect usage, superfluous commas, and mixed metaphors, will tire of the continual cluttering of the text with names that belong buried in the footnotes. This fault is not the author's but his editor's. The book needs a good, hard, heavy blue-penciling, which would have cut it by a third and made it cheaper, stronger, clearer, and accessible to a wider public.

THE BOOK'S difficulty is a pity, because its thesis deserves wide circulation. More than a reinterpretation of the Mexican Revolution, Ruiz implicitly offers important wisdom on contemporary Mexico. In effect he confirms the historical legitimacy of the last 35 years of Mexican capitalist development, its origin in the campaigns by the Maderos, the Carranzas, and the Obregóns against monopolistic foreign bosses and old dictators and against Zapatistas and Villistas as well. The politicians who manage Mexico today have not betrayed the revolutionary heritage. They faithfully continue revolutionary traditions by preaching patriotism and freedom, reducing foreign monopolists to foreign partners, mock-

"GUESS WHO publicly set fire to a Soviet flag last December? Give up? Okay, it was a group of Harvard and Radcliffe students — and they did it right in the center of Harvard Yard. 'We feel sympathy for those people who have to fight and die for their freedom. We don't want to allow people to forget Afghanistan and Poland.' These are clearly callow freshmen, not yet tutored in the complexities of a world where the East/West struggle has been replaced by the North/South dialogue."

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ing civic virtue, perpetuating corruption, maintaining tight constraints on peasant and labor movements, and fortifying a system of enormous inequality, which yields mighty concentrations of wealth and vast ranges of gruesome poverty in the city and countryside.

Still more significant are the questions that Ruiz raises about nationalism. In Mexico and other such countries nationalism is supposed to unite "the people" for great struggles to solve great national problems. But really two kinds of nationalism have emerged there in the 20th century, to solve two different kinds of great national problems. One is the nationalism of businessmen, to force better deals for themselves in their own country. The other is the nationalism of the poor, at first to protect only their culture, later to claim the rudiments of an orderly and respectable life on old or new terms. The two nationalisms have rarely cooperated. There has rarely been reason for them to. In these countries the solutions that the businessmen have won have made life more miserable for most people there, and solutions that would substantially benefit the poor would make most business impossible. The nationalist "rebellion" in Mexico 60-70 years ago is certainly not "the precursor of the socialist explosions of the 20th century." It is a precursor of many other conflicts in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, between a right to private profit and a right to common honor.

John Womack Jr.

John Womack Jr. is professor of history at Harvard University and author of *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (Vintage).

Culture and Anarchy

Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities by Stanley Fish

(Harvard University Press; $17.50)

One day in 1971, Professor Stanley Fish tried an experiment in one of his literature classes. Pointing to a random list of names on the blackboard left over from a previous class, Fish told the students "that what they saw on the blackboard was a religious poem of the kind they had been studying," and he asked them to interpret it. Immediately, he reports, the students began to find intricate allegorical meanings in this "text." For example, the name "Ohmann" at the end of the list was seen as representing "omen," "Oh Man," "amen," and so forth.

Now one might think this incident only shows how deplorably susceptible college students can be, or how cynically they will go along with the often mechanical ritual of classroom explication. But for Fish the behavior of the students was not an aberration but a model of all acts of textual interpretation, and of interpretation as such. It illustrates the main polemical point of *Is There a Text in this Class?*, which is that the meanings of texts are not discovered but created by readers. Thus "it is not that the presence of poetic qualities compels a certain kind of attention but that the paying of a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities." There are, in short, no "facts" either in texts or in the world which predetermine our interpretations; for what we conceive the facts to be will itself already have been determined by our interpretive apparatus. The line of argument can be traced back to Kant, but it has gained momentum in the last half-century, as many of the disciplines have reacted against the *hubris* of science's claim to discover a bedrock of hard fact on which knowledge is founded. There is no such bedrock, it is argued, since facts are already "theory-laden."

Before the reader gets to this central argument, however, he must work his way through a series of essays whose assumptions Fish now rejects. Giving this collection of essays shape and momentum are explanatory notes which tell us what of each essay Fish now repudiates and what he would salvage. Several of the essays contain readings of literary texts, at least a few of them brilliant, like the analysis of *Coriolanus*. But the main interest of these practical exercises lies in the theoretical issues they exemplify. "Literary theory" is enjoying a boom in literature departments at the moment, and anybody curious about the issues can learn much from Fish's very readable exposition. Fish's concern with "the authority of interpretive communities" will be of interest to teachers, especially those who have sometimes felt at a loss to explain to students (or to themselves) how it is one interpretation of a text can be shown to be better than another. Some readers will be put off by Fish's delight in paradox, his seeming denial of the obvious. But they should ask themselves just how they *can* claim to know what any utterance means. Like many "obvious" matters, this one proves surprisingly perplexing the more you look into it. On the other hand, Fish's attempt to resolve the perplexities by locating the source of authority in the reader has problems.

At the close of the 1960s, academic criticism rediscovered the reader. He had been banished from consideration by the New Criticism of the 1940s and 1950s, which heeded T. S. Eliot's injunction to put "the poem itself" at the forefront of critical attention, not the poet or the reader. "Reader-response criticism," as it has come to be called, has occasionally been marked by a strange sort of literary populism, which gives the reader the "right" to fabricate his own private meaning of a work, as if this were an extension of the citizen's right to his opinion. But at its best, this criticism has brought a salutary reminder that literary (and other) texts take on reality only when experienced by actual readers. It has stimulated useful inquiries, which take up where psycholinguists began, into the mysteries of human understanding. And it has produced some interesting new ways of reading literary works.

In the early 1970s Stanley Fish stirred things up with one of these new ways, which he termed "affective stylistics." Arguing against the fading New Critics that literary meaning had been conceived too narrowly as static "structure," Fish proceeded to reconceive it as an "event" in the unfolding experience of the reader as he moves through the work. When Fish applied his method to 17th-century authors such as Bunyan, Browne, Bacon, and Milton, their works came out looking startlingly different

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from the way they had looked under earlier kinds of criticism and scholarship. They were no longer continuous discourses ordered toward a unifying meaning, but resembled a series of exploding fireworks, each explosion overturning expectations previously built up in the reader. For example, take the following sentence from Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*: "That Judas perished by hanging himself, there is no certainty in Scripture. . . ." Fish contends that the first nine words lead the reader to expect an affirmation: there is no . . . doubt. When instead the reader encounters, "no . . . *certainty*," his "point of reference becomes *un*certain," he is suspended in indeterminacy, "decertainized." But Fish claims we are blind to this important effect as long as we continue to view the text as an object with a net "meaning." When we view it as a process unfolding in the reader's experience, static meaning is undone.

FISH'S THESIS was intriguing, but critics pointed out that experimental evidence (which Fish didn't claim to have) didn't bear out his account of the reading process. Fish's model "reader" was to all appearances a kind of moron, a person so improbably subject to being surprised by each turn of phrase in a text that he never learns to expect what is coming. Furthermore, if one looks up the context of the sentence by Browne adduced by Fish, one sees that it would render doubtful Fish's interpretation of the sentence. Browne is saying at this point in *Religio Medici* that though on some topics Scripture is ambiguous, these ambiguities needn't trouble us since they are not fundamental to faith. The uncertainty about how Judas died is a case in point. The "decertainizing" Fish finds would never take place if the sentence were read in context.

But no sooner had critics begun to point out such difficulties in Fish's affective stylistics than Fish himself was having second thoughts about it, though for other reasons. What bothered Fish was not that his concept of reading had been primitive but that he had not freed himself from the idea that the reader is guided by a preexistent text. Under his method, texts became dynamic, explosive, destabilized, but the implication remained that these effects are *there*, present *in* the texts. As Fish now confesses, "the integrity of the text was as basic to [affective stylistics] as it was to the position of the New Critics." "In order to argue for a common reading experience, I felt obliged to posit an object in relation to which readers' activities could be declared uniform, and that object was the text. . . ." Embarrassed by this remnant of empiricism, according to which we can have common perceptions of the world because the world is "out there" independent of perceivers, Fish proceeded to get rid of the text. Surveying the criticism of Milton, he concluded that attempts to determine what part of that criticism was more or less correct rested on mere professorial superstition. There is no correct interpretation of a text, since what we call the "text"—in this case the text of Milton—is but the sum of all the various different and conflicting readings of Milton since Milton wrote. When a new interpretation gains favor among experts, this occurs not because of reasoned argument but because of the force or flamboyance of the revisionist critic. His affective criticism, Fish now declared, is a "superior fiction"; it "relieves me of the obligation to be right (a standard that simply drops out) and demands only that I be interesting. . . ."

If free verse, as Robert Frost is supposed to have said, is like playing tennis without a net, then "interpretations" unguided by the "obligation to be right" are like playing the game without lines as well. But once again, Fish's critics had hardly begun to unlimber their arguments against this vulnerable position before Fish had deserted it for another —the one to which he remains committed for the moment. Citing his above-quoted declaration of independence from standards, Fish now states "I have long since repudiated this declaration along with the relativism it implies." "Long since" is a bit confusing, for the now-repudiated statement was published in late 1976, but let that pass. From Fish's present standpoint, what drops out is not a standard of right interpretation as such but

> a standard of right that exists independently of community goals and assumptions. Within a community, however, a standard of right (and wrong) can always be invoked because it will be invoked against the background of a prior understanding as to what counts as a fact, what is bearable as an argument, what will be recognized as a purpose, and so on.

Thus it is still true that texts are created by the reader, but this is now true in a way that no longer releases the reader from accountability to standards. Since "the reader" is conceived not as an isolated agent but as a member of an interpretive community whose conventions inform his ways of seeing the world, the reader's whimsically fabricating "his own" text is not even a possibility. On the other hand—a big on the other hand—Fish argues that since interpretive communities are human institutions, they are subject to change and so therefore are the standards of correct interpretation. There is, then, always a correct interpretation of a text, but what that is may change from one time and place to another.

IT SEEMS the net has been put back up and the court-lines chalked back in, but it is hard to tell for sure. Fish implies that the "integrity of the text" has been restored, but only because we are always inside some interpretive institution that tells what the text is. This is not wholly reassuring, since it's not clear how one knows which interpretive institution one belongs to, especially if there are a great many of them competing for one's allegiance, as there are in a pluralistic culture. And Fish still seems to deny that it makes sense to talk about texts as objective entities, even though his own account seems to require that they be such entities. If interpretive strategies alone were sufficient to determine interpretations, one wonders why Fish's students needed the stimulus of those names before they began interpreting. Couldn't Fish, by his logic, have induced the same response in them by saying "that's a poem" while pointing to the ceiling, or the window, or his elbow? Fish might reply that it's possible to imagine a culture in which elbows in some situations count as poems. The question would remain, didn't Fish have to point to *something* to trigger a poetry-interpreting response, and didn't that something have to be *there* for us to account for the agreement of the respondents? Again, Fish could retort that "something there" is already an interpretation-laden description (he does in fact say that), and if several subjects agree in recognizing "it" this is only because they happen to belong to the same interpretive community. "Objective facts" exist for us only within interpretive communities.

Such a reply rescues Fish's thesis, but only by conceding its utter triviality. Objective facts may exist only within institutions, but it's hard to imagine anybody's not belonging to the institution in which some data would be recognized on Fish's board. Even a person

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who knew no English and had never seen anything like a classroom would perceive something on Fish's blackboard, however little he might make of it, and that something would overlap with the students' perceptions. I introduce this naive observer not to suggest there is a pure, transparent perception of the world that isn't already interpretation-laden and institutional, but to suggest that there is a *master*-institution in which different interpretive institutions converge. Since the same sensations can be acknowledged within different interpretive institutions, they cannot be a function of any one of these institutions alone. Since we all belong to the same master-institution, it is true but trivial that objective facts are institutionally determined.

In short, the key question is not whether facts are institutional—that they are is a tautology—but whether there are institutions to which we cannot imagine ourselves not belonging. If seeing marks on a board is an "institution," it differs from institutions like a classroom or a baseball game in that one cannot decide to drop out of it to join some alternative institution. The same is true of the larger institution of rational discourse, but Fish seems to want to get around this. He states for example that John Searle's notion of "brute facts" is valid only as long as we adhere to the "fiction" of "intelligibility itself," as if that were a mere matter of choice. But since there is no conceivable observation-point from which one could determine that "intelligibility itself" is a "fiction," calling it that makes little sense. Saying that brute facts exist only within a convention of intelligibility is the same as saying brute facts exist, period.

By ignoring the overlap between conflicting interpretive institutions which secures a common world of fact, Fish gives the impression that interpretive standards are more changeable than they are. If there were no such overlap, we could never be said to disagree or change our minds about something, since disagreeing or changing our minds assumes we are talking about "the same" thing. In order to resist coming to terms with this "same thing," Fish makes much of an incident involving a ballplayer who disconcerted sports writers by insisting his home runs were God's doings, not his. Fish says the player "simply did not recognize the facts to which sports writers' questions routinely refer." But Fish's own account of the incident makes clear the player did indeed recognize the same facts (that he'd hit two home runs); he simply interpreted their cause differently.

Fish's last chapter all but concedes the triviality of his previous argument, though he continues to write with the air of a man creating a scandal. All that had seemed to be thrown overboard is hauled back up on deck and reinstated:

> we have everything we always had. . . . We can convince others that they are wrong, argue that one interpretation is better than another, cite evidence in support of the interpretations we prefer; it is just that we do all those things within a set of institutional assumptions that can themselves become the objects of dispute.

Well, we can dispute lots of assumptions, but we can hardly dispute those on which the procedures of disputing depend. One who has tried is the philosopher Jacques Derrida (with whom Fish seems to identify), but Derrida has had to concoct a kind of language of Mars, repealing the law of non-contradiction in logic, in order to do so. Even Derrida has to make sense in the old ways if he wants to argue.

Why does any of this matter? One answer would be that it doesn't, but as Fish reminds us, philosophers have wrestled with questions that don't matter, or that didn't seem to matter at the time in any practical way. But a better answer would be that disputes over whether texts can be interpreted reliably betray a more general uncertainty about whether we can transcend the ideological divisions of a politicized culture to agree that we inhabit a common world—if only so that we can engage in debate about that world and how to live in it. The dilemma of a culture so pluralized that it sees all reality as determined by the ideology of the observer is that it can't argue with itself, since it won't grant itself that measure of trans-ideological agreement necessary to make argument possible. The real question in such a culture is not how we can achieve a consensus but how we can disagree. The low quality of both our political and intellectual debate testifies to the difficulty we have answering that question.

Gerald Graff

Gerald Graff is professor of English at Northwestern University and the author of *Literature Against Itself: Literary Ideas in Modern Society* (University of Chicago Press). He is currently teaching at the University of California at Berkeley.

Anti-Tax, Not Anti-Government

Revolt of the Haves: Tax Rebellions and Hard Times by Robert Kuttner

(Simon & Schuster; $13.95)

No event has a more exalted place in the pantheon of post-New Deal politics than the citizen tax revolt symbolized by California's Proposition 13. For triumphant conservatives, the victory of longtime anti-tax activists Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann signaled the end of their long march through the political wilderness and the beginning of the final assault on the institutions of big government. For subdued liberals, it laid bare a distressing new streak of social meanness. Columnist Joseph Kraft denounced Californians' "populist hedonism." A letter-writer to the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* described Proposition 13 as "the Watts riot of the white middle-class."

Although his title suggests a certain sympathy with this second point of view, journalist Robert Kuttner, editor of the left-leaning *Working Papers for a New Society*, moves considerably beyond both of them in his richly detailed and intriguing book. Unlike most liberals, Kuttner recognizes Proposition 13 for what it was—"that rarest of political events, an authentic mass protest brought on by economic grievances." But in sharp contrast to conservatives, he argues that the nationwide tax revolt it inspired had little, if anything, to do with some kind of national revulsion against government.

Kuttner writes:

> Voter anger in most states was directed against unfair tax burdens first, general pocketbook frustrations second, and 'gov-

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> ernment' only a distant third. But the failure of many orthodox liberals to take tax grievances seriously, and their reflexive concern with defending the level of government outlays rather than their quality, drove many working-class constituents into an odd alliance with right-wing populists of the Jarvis stripe and later with business conservatives. . . . The result was a genuine popular upheaval in which an authentic popular grievance was badly fumbled by the mainstream politicians and carried by the Right, setting in motion ideological tides that have developed their own rhythm.

Thus, Kuttner's title has an ironic twist which reflects a story replete with missed opportunities, unintended consequences, and strange political bedfellows that defy all economic logic. *Revolt of the Haves* describes how the failure of liberal politics turned a "pocketbook protest" into an "ideological windfall for conservatives." It uses the tax revolt of the late 1970s as an extended metaphor for American politics of the 1980s.

By far the most entertaining and fast-moving part of Kuttner's book is his reconstruction of the events leading up to the overwhelming victory of Proposition 13 in June 1978. What kindled taxpayer resentment in California was not the growth of state government but a massive shift in the property tax burden from businesses to homeowners. "Good government" reforms of tax assessment procedures in the mid-1960s (designed to root out corruption by county tax assessors) had the unforeseen effect of cutting assessments on commercial property. And the vertiginous housing inflation of the 1970s sent homeowner taxes through the roof. While total tax revenues in California actually fell during the decade—from 7.2 percent of personal income in 1972 to 6.5 percent in 1977—property taxes of individual homeowners doubled and tripled. Residential housing accounted for 34 percent of property tax revenues in 1974-75; four years later, on the eve of the Proposition 13 vote, the figure was 45 percent.

When mainstream politicians failed to respond to the obvious economic distress of homeowners (California governor Jerry Brown sat on a budget surplus estimated at $750 million and the state legislature failed to agree on a formula for tax relief), the field was open to Jarvis and his band of grassroots activists who had been laboring in relative obscurity for nearly 20 years. Proposition 13 was patently inequitable (of the $5.5 billion in savings from the initiative, $3.5 billion went to landlords and the owners of business property, whose lower taxes were responsible for higher homeowner rates in the first place); nevertheless, it became the object of a populist crusade. Jarvis found himself in the enviable position of having the entire spectrum of the California political establishment arrayed against him—including, in what must be definitive proof that the connection between political behavior and economic interest is anything but direct, the state's major corporations and business associations. He was so successful in portraying what was essentially an "income transfer for the rich" as a popular expression of economic discontent and frustration with unresponsive politicians that even the poor voted by a slight majority for Proposition 13.

BUT THE sentiment that fueled this and subsequent tax revolts, Kuttner argues, was not so much anti-government as anti-tax. Government spending in the United States has stabilized since the late 1960s. During the past five years, public expenditures have dropped as a share of GNP. In fact, even property taxes, as a percentage of gross personal income, declined in all but eight states between 1972 and 1977. However, "the incidence of the property tax burden . . . shifted dramatically from business onto homeowners, and while *total* revenues grew at a slower rate than total income, taxes on homes typically increased." Thus, states such as Idaho, which experienced a tax revolt on a par with California's, were not bastions of big government but places where this shift in the property tax burden was most severe. And those states that successfully provided tax relief for homeowners or reduced the public sector's dependence on the property tax altogether passed through the tax revolt storm relatively unscathed.

Kuttner lists two reasons for the shifting property tax burden. In the mid-1960s corporations began court challenges to the traditional assessment practices that taxed commercial property at higher rates than homes. And the last decade has seen the rapid proliferation of a costly "abatement game" in which states and municipalities, desperate for economic development, compete in the amount and variety of lucrative tax breaks they offer to business in order to attract corporate investment.

Between 1973 and 1979, for example, the exempt portion of New York City's tax base grew from 35 to 41 percent; the taxes sacrificed by a city plagued by fiscal crisis totaled over $100 million per year. All told, New York has $15 billion of commercial property on its rolls which goes untaxed thanks to one exemption or another. And to make matters worse, most of them are unnecessary. A 1979 city audit revealed that of $84 million in tax exemptions during an 18-month period, $56 million went to development projects that would have gone forward anyway.

But instead of turning voter anger against the corporations and their tax-break windfalls, the shift in the property tax burden has become what Kuttner, in a marvelous phrase, calls "a double carom shot for business." Not only have corporations benefited from lower property taxes; they have skillfully exploited consumer frustrations over rising homeowner taxes to justify even more tax breaks for themselves. Thus, in August 1978, just two months after Proposition 13, Charls Walker, "probably the shrewdest lobbyist in Washington," played on congressional fears of a nationwide tax revolt to engineer a substantial cut in the federal capital gains tax. In the two years since, Walker has become the high priest of a tight-knit cult of corporate lobbyists whose sole purpose is to blame every problem of the American economy—from declining productivity to poor capital formation, chronic stagflation to lack of competitiveness—on, you guessed it, government and its high taxes.

Kuttner's accomplishment in *Revolt of the Haves* is to explain how liberals have been so thoroughly closed out of this and other economic policy debates. The roots of liberalism's current failure lie in the "Faustian bargain" that American liberals have made with a variety of established economic interests over the past 20 years. To further their social objectives, liberals created a patchwork quilt of public-private partnerships designed to accommodate politically powerful private interest groups rather than provide efficient social services. As a

Coming:

Edmund S. Morgan

on George Washington.

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result, we are saddled with a welfare state combining the worst of two worlds —not "the efficiency of private enterprise with the public purpose of government" but "the greed of business with the sloth of bureaucracy."

It is this Achilles heel of liberalism that gives the conservative attack on big government such resonance. The only way liberals can hope to get back in the political game is to develop their own critique of the American welfare state—not from the right but from the left. Kuttner points the way to this critique. *Revolt of the Haves* is the first step in an authentic redefinition of an American liberalism that is something more than a mimicry of the current nostrums of the right.

Robert Howard

Robert Howard is a Washington writer.

Brief Review

Badenheim 1939
by Aharon Appelfeld
translated by Dalya Bilu

(Godine; $10)

This short novel is a cause for celebration. At a time when the Holocaust is being dragged to the level of soap opera and simplistic morality, Appelfeld reaches out with his deceptively simple pen to grace it with universal meaning. He has created literature out of the Holocaust and yet never even mentions it—an answer to those who think it impossible to create good fiction on this theme. Appelfeld achieves this small miracle by the use of parable, almost a lost art form in this age of sophistication when we reject superficially simple yet complex truths for the exhausting detail of self-expression and "relationships."

Badenheim 1939 deals with Jews in an Austrian spa in the early to late summer of 1939, but it is also about people of any faith and any background, everywhere and always: people so involved in the small pleasures of everyday life that they cannot see what is happening around them, or rather, see but deny what they see.

The story is told in the simplest language. The atmosphere is surreal—a surrealism made poignant by our knowledge of what is to come. Many of the characters have only puppet status, and are not even granted names. They are known as the hotelier, the pastry-shop owner, the twins, the schoolgirl, and so on. Only those with names are given an uneasy and wavering insight into what is happening.

The regular vacationers come to Badenheim to while away another summer. The impresario Dr. Pappenheim arrives to organize the annual festival of the arts. And the officials of the sanitation department—bland, faceless presences —begin a rigorous check of all Badenheim residents, townspeople and vacationers. Slowly, it appears that everyone in the town is Jewish.

As spring moves into a radiant summer, some of Dr. Pappenheim's artists fail to arrive. The vacationers complain, but console themselves with cream and strawberry tarts, with flirtations and petty arguments. The pharmacist's sick wife sees the transparency of death in everyone, but that is not a reflection of the disease encroaching on them from without, it is only her own sickness.

The sanitation department puts up posters advertising the delights of Poland, and it soon becomes clear that everyone is to be transferred to Poland. "Yes, why not Poland?" is the general reaction. Since they have no choice, they try to make the best of it. Other Jews begin to arrive, to await transfer to Poland. They argue about the merits and demerits of Poland. No one asks why. Were Appelfeld a lesser writer, we might scoff at these people's self-delusion. Instead we pity and mourn it, and understand that self-delusion may be the last defense against the unthinkable.

Appelfeld is a friend and student of Adin Steinsalz, the Israeli talmudist and kabbalist whose philosophy has shaken many Jews out of complacency and indifference. "So long as you're struggling," says Steinsalz, "there can't be despair. Despair is one of the supreme sins, because a despairing person ceases to struggle. Despair is the ultimate defeat; it is death. It has a feeling of completeness to it, closely connected to smugness." And as we follow the smug blindness of the people of Badenheim as they wait for their own unacknowledged death, this novel becomes a brilliant illustration of Steinsalz's philosophy. "If you are satisfied, if things are not so great but bearable, then you stay in one place and there's no movement, no life," says Steinsalz. Appelfeld takes this pronouncement one inevitable step further, to physical death.

Badenheim 1939 is easy to read, but it is not easy reading. It banishes ease, relaxation, and escape, and pleads for thought and awareness. Steinsalz would argue that this is the essence of Jewishness. If so, the world cannot afford to be without it.

Lesley Hazelton

Lesley Hazelton's latest book is *Where Mountains Roar: A Personal Report From the Sinai and Negev Deserts* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston).

Correspondence, *from page 5*

Faced with my delusion, I have no wish to compound my heresy with perfidy. I am sure my fellow closet conservatives will join me in requesting that you sublease the balance of our subscriptions to *National Review*.

John C. Kelly
Chicago, Illinois

Violence

To the editors:

Because I have been beaten and robbed, I share Nicholas von Hoffman's passionate concern ("A Nation of Barbarians," *TNR*, December 27, 1980) with violent crime. Yet I question whether the remedy is the "junking" of our criminal justice system. Of course perpetrators of ghastly crimes are protected by our rules of criminal procedure. But the innocent who have been mistakenly accused of crimes also are protected. The "technical gibberish" von Hoffman deplores is the procedural embodiment of one of the glories of a free society: the idea that one is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

H. Franklin Kissane
Los Angeles, California

The editors welcome correspondence from TNR's readers. Letters intended for publication should include the correspondent's full name, address, and telephone number, should be typed double-spaced, and held to under 200 words. Longer letters may be abridged due to lack of space.

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Washington Diarist

Regrets

Her voice, as Gatsby said of Daisy's, was full of money. She'd called, she said, to ask me to lunch. I was flattered; I was also suspicious. Since we'd never met, I asked her why the invitation. "To get your advice on a most intriguing project." In the philanthropic class, asking for advice is often the squeamish preliminary to asking for cash. So I pressed my query. A plan to paint the Sinai—paint *it*, not paint a picture *of* it—very beautiful, desert, desolate, peace, Belgian artist, Baron Rothschild, symbolism, Bedouins, vivid color, nature, Arabs, Egyptians, Israelis, people, concern, international committee, etc., etc. My regrets, I said. I was busy. Perhaps another day? No, I was over-committed; no, I wasn't interested; no, I couldn't think of anyone else. A charitable idea that appeals to the frothy rich. Nothing would come of it, I predicted to myself. The next time I'd see the name of the woman with the moneyed voice, it would be in the "Style" section of the *Washington Post*, reporting that she'd given a dance in Middleburg, Virginia, to benefit the American Animal Hospital in Paris. I was sure I wouldn't hear of a plan to paint the Sinai ever again. I was wrong. But it's no longer a plan; it's been done. A recent issue of *Paris-Match* shows the vivid color vividly, cobalt blue to be precise. The artist chose blue because it "does not exist on the earth's surface." Obvious choice, isn't it? *Time* reports that five square miles of sand and stone are now done over in 24,000 pounds of acrylic paints. The "Peace Junction," as President Sadat has dubbed the area, is not far from where legend places Mt. Sinai. Scientists say the color will adhere for at least 30 years. Maybe I'm paranoid about such matters, but imagine for a moment that the Israelis had arranged this technicolor transformation of the stark lunar landscape in which humankind's deepest convictions on personal morality were born. The Security Council would condemn, UNESCO would charge cultural genocide, Dr. Waldheim would upbraid, the World Health Organization would allege metallic poisoning, the responsible press would deplore, the Council of Churches would urge some form of internationalization, Israel's friends would wince, senators Hatfield and Percy would introduce an amendment to reduce US aid, environmentalists would thunder. But it's not the Israelis who've done it or allowed it. Their only part in this is to have given the Sinai back to Egypt. So the world, pleasantly amused by this vulgar victory of man over nature, awaits some offending act by Israel. It is sure to come, probably in Jerusalem, whether the offense be an archaeological dig or a housing project. Any pretext will do.

Everyone, it seems, now gives a farewell address. Not just presidents, but press agents like Hodding Carter and hired heads like Zbigniew Brzezinski. Also ambassadors, like Robert White in El Salvador, who started singing his swan song weeks before he was actually ousted. The latest departing ambassador to be heard from is Jimmy Carter's old friend and supporter, James C. West, who used to do his civic boosterism out of South Carolina but took his enthusiasms to Saudi Arabia three and a half years ago. It used to be, and still ought to be, that ambassadors were seen in public but not heard, and certainly not heard adding to public pressure on the president. But anything goes after Andy Young, and Ambassador West did his hectoring of the new administration in an interview with the *New York Times*. You know his message: all about the "moderate" Saudis and how they need, realistically and as a sign of trust, the bomb racks and air-to-air missile fittings former defense secretary Brown promised we wouldn't provide when we sold them 62 F-15s two years ago. The ambassador also threatened that Reagan will have to deliver the West Bank and Jerusalem, and a comprehensive Middle East settlement besides. If this doesn't happen, "The relationship could deteriorate very rapidly." He was good enough to translate: no more oil at "reasonable prices." Sheikh Yamani said the same thing the same day. Reasonable? I still don't understand why the Saudi ruling princes can successfully blackmail us, when we are all that stands between them and a nasty destiny. The standard characterization of Saudi behavior as "moderate" should affront anyone who believes that words still have meaning. Late last month in Taif, the Saudis hosted a pan-Islamic conference that began with a prayer to Allah to help Moslems "cleanse Jerusalem of the Jews." Prince Fahd called for a *jihad* (holy war) against Israel, aiming "to save the parts of Islamic body that are agonized by the Zionist occupation in Palestine." Everything's relative, I suppose, but not everything is moderate.

The New Republic is now deep into its 67th and just possibly its healthiest year, but we all know that other magazines do come and go. One that went recently is *Marxist Perspectives*, a quarterly we'd welcomed in these pages a bare three years ago. Produced by a cohort of left intellectuals based around historians (and *TNR* contributors) Eugene Genovese and John Womack, it was a model of non-dogmatic scholarship with a Marxist orientation. It's sad. The day I learned that there'd be no more of *Marxist Perspectives*, the first and very auspicious issue of *democracy* arrived in the mail. A quarterly project of inventor-entrepreneur Max Palevsky and political theorist Sheldon Wolin, the magazine aims at stimulating a radical renewal in social thought and social policy. It deserves respectful reading. But it will win sustained influence only if it avoids the fatal weakness of the American left, which is to want the US, on a largely false analysis of our role and that of others, to be weak in the world. While I'm advising on magazines, I'd like to call attention to a fascinating article in the February 19 issue of the *New York Review of Books*, by Nick Eberstadt. It is a meticulous and startling discussion of "The Health Crisis in the USSR." The present State Department surely will understand that the unprecedented increase in infant mortality and decline in life expectancy in the Soviet Union has implications for the conduct of US foreign policy. Maybe also the evident failure of one of communism's most highly touted successes will discredit, among liberal and other intellectuals, the model of social organization we reject for ourselves but somehow seem to believe is the one most appropriate for developing nations. The health system in the USSR is already a human catastrophe for its own population. That catastrophe, Eberstadt argues persuasively, is not likely to lead the Soviets in an introspective direction. Which is to say that a failure in the West to grasp the deterioration of the most important indices of social progress in the Soviet Union may lead to catastrophes—some violent, others incremental—for other populations as well.

M.P.

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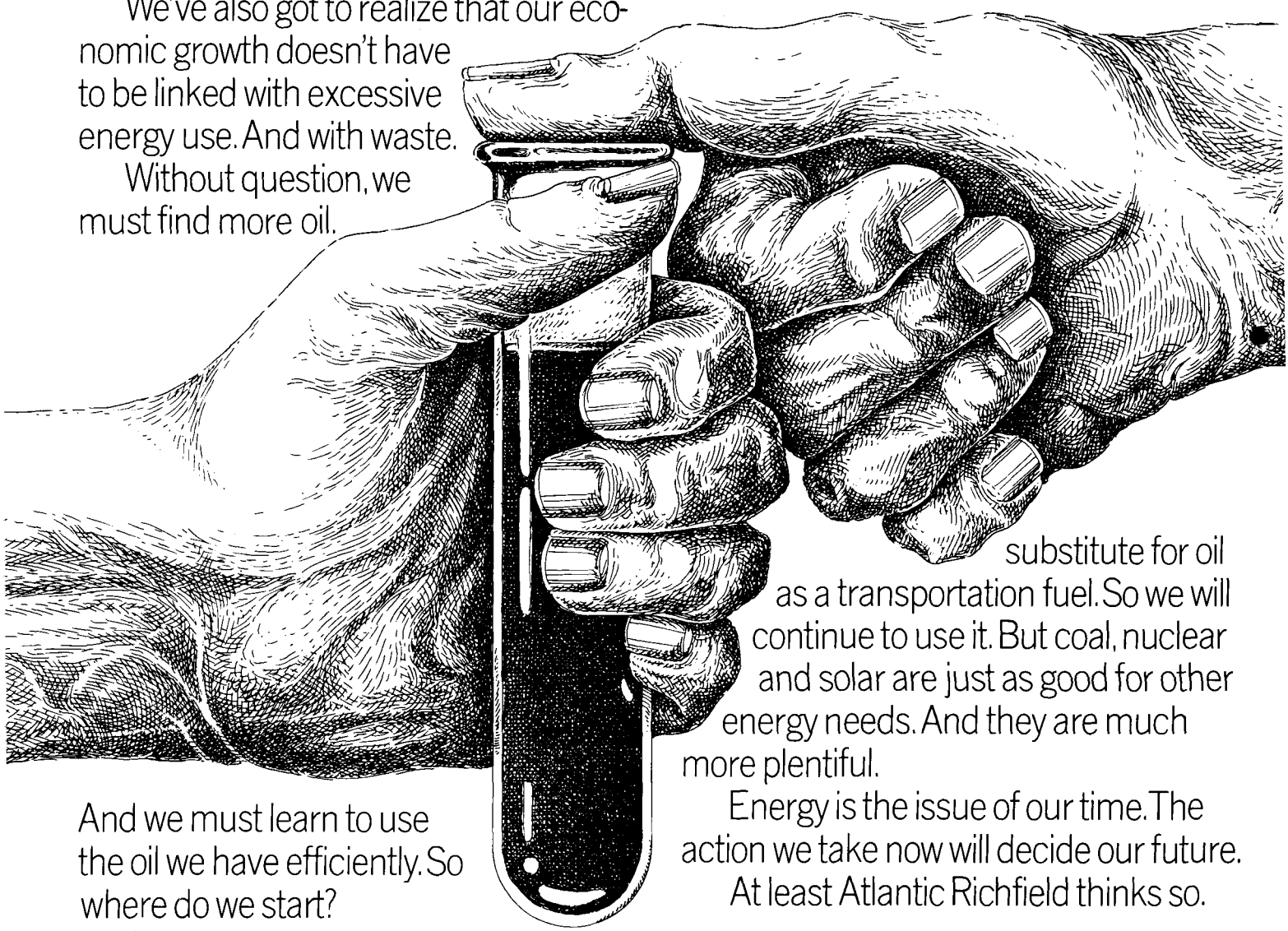

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